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TO

THE AUTHOR

OF

"CONTARINI FLEMING,"

WHOSE PERFECT GENIUS

SUGGESTED

THIS IMPERFECT HISTORY.

PART I.

Choral Life.

CHARLES AUCHESTER.

CHAPTER I.

I NEVER wrote a long letter in my life. It is the manual part I dislike; arranging the paper, holding the pen in my fingers, and finding my arm exhausted with carrying it to and from the inkstand. It does not signify, though; for I have made arrangements with my free will to write more than a letter—a life, or rather the life of a life;—let none pause to consider what this means, neither quite Germanly mysterious, nor quite Saxonly simple—like my origin.

There are many literal presentations of ordinary personages, in books, which I am informed and I suppose I am to assure myself, are introduced

expressly to intensify and illustrate the chief and peculiar interest, where an interest is; or to allure the attention of the implicit, where it is not. But how does it happen, that the delineations of the gods among men, the heroic gifted few, the beings of imaginative might or genius, are so infinitely more literal? Who—worshipping, if not strong enough to serve the Ideal—can endure the graceless ignorance of his subject, betrayed by many a biographer, accepted and accomplished in his style? Who, so worshipping, can do anything but shudder at the meagre, crude, mistakeable portraits of Shakspere, of Verulam, of Beethoven? Heaven send my own may not make me shudder first; and that in my attempt to recall, through a kind of artistic interlight, a few remembered lineaments, I be not self-condemned to blush for the spiritual craft, whose first law only I have learned.

I know how many notions grown persons entertain of their childhood as real, which are factitious, and founded upon elder experience until they become confounded with it; but I also feel that in great part we neglect our earliest impressions as vague, which were the truest and best we ever

had. I believe none can recall their childish estimate or essence, without identifying with it their present intimate selves. In my own case the analogy is perfect between my conceptions then, and my positive existence now. So every one must feel, who is at all acquainted with the liabilities of those who follow Art.

The man of power may manage to merge his individuality in his expansive association with the individuality of others — the man of science quenches self-consciousness in abstraction — and not a few, who follow with hot energy some worldly calling, become in its exercise as itself; nor for a solitary moment are left alone with their personality to remember even that, as separate and distinctly real.

But all artists, whether acknowledged or amateur, must have proved that for themselves the gage of Immortality, in Life as in Art, consists in their self-acquaintance, their self-reliance, their exact self-appreciation with reference to their masters, their models, their one supreme Ideal.

I was born in a city of England farthest from the sea, within whose liberties my grandfather and father had resided, acquiring at once a steady

profit, and an honourable commercial fame. Never mind what they were, or in which street or square their stocked warehouses were planted, alluring the eyes and hearts of the pupils of Adam Smith. I remember the buildings well; but my elder brother, the eldest of our family, was established there when I first recall them, and he was always there, residing on the premises. He was indeed, very many years my senior, and I little knew him, but he was a steady excellent person with a tolerable tenor voice, and punctilious filial observances towards our admirable mother. My father was born in England, but though his ancestors were generally Saxon, an infusion of Norman blood had taken place in his family a generation or two behind him, and I always suspected that we owed to the old breeding of Claire Renée de Fontenelle some of our peculiarities and refinements, though my father always maintained that they flowed directly from our mother. He was travelling for the House, upon the Continent, when he first found her out, imbedded like a gem by a little German river; and she left with him, unrepiningly, her still but romantic home, not again to revisit it.

My mother must have been in her girlhood, as

she was in her maturest years, a domestic presence of purity, kindliness, and home-heartedness; she had been accustomed to every kind of household manœuvre, and her needlework was something exquisite. From her German mother she inherited the quietness of which grace is born, the prudence with which wisdom dwells, and many an attribute of virtue; but from her father she inherited the right, to name herself of Hebrew origin. Herein my chief glory lies, and whatever enlightenment my destiny has boasted, streams from that radiant point. I know that there are many who would as genuinely rejoice in descent from Mahomet, from Attila, or from Robin Hood, as from any of Israel's children; but I claim the golden link in my genealogy as that which connects it with Eternity, and with all that in my Faith is glorious.

My mother had lived in a certain seclusion for some years before I first began to realize; for my father died before my first year's close. We still resided near the house of business—not in it, for that was my brother's now; and Fred had lately brought home a wife. But we were quite settled and at home in the house I first remember, when it breaks picture-like on my dawning

memory. I had three sisters; Clotilda was the eldest, and only a year younger than Fred: she was an extraordinarily clever person, though totally destitute of art or artistic yearnings. She had been educated unwontedly, and at least understood all that she had learned. Her favourite pursuits were reading, and comparing lexicons and analyses of different languages, and endeavouring to find common roots for all; but she could and did, work perfectly, write a fine close hand, and very vigorously superintend the household in my mother's absence or indisposition. She had rather a queer face, like one of the puritan visages in antique portraits; but a very cheerful smile, and perfect composure of manner—a great charm in mine eyes, oh ye nymphs and graces!—Millicent, three years younger, was a spirit of gentleness—imperceptibly instructing me she must be treated with a sort of awe. Her melancholy oval face, and her pale eyelids, showed more of the Hebrew than any of us, excepting myself; only I was plain, and she remarkably pleasing. Lydia, my youngest sister, was rather showy than brilliant, and rather bright than keen; but not much of either: and yet she was always kind to me, and I should have grieved

to miss her round brown eyes at our breakfast table, or her loud ringing laugh upstairs from the kitchen; for she had the pantry key.

Both Millicent and Lydia played and sang, if not very powerfully, yet with superior taste. Millicent's notes, not many in number, were as the notes of a cooing dove. Before I was five years old, I used to sit upon the old grand piano and watch their faces while they sang on Sunday evenings: my mother in a tremulous soprano, with Fred's tenor, and the bass of a friend of his. This did not please me; and here let me say, that musical temperament as surely asserts itself in aversion to discordant or not pure, as in desire for sweet and true sounds. I am certain this is true; I was always happy when Millicent sang alone, or even when she and Lydia mixed their notes, for both had an ear as accurate for tune and for time as can be found in England, or indeed in Germany: but oh! I have writhed beneath the dronings of Hatchardson's bass, on quartette or chorale an audible blemish; and in a rare composition now and then the distorting and distracting point on which I was morbidly obliged to fasten my attention. We had no other music, ex-

cept a little of the same kind not quite so good, from various members of families in the neighbourhood, professing to play or sing; but I will not dwell on those, for they are displaced by images more significant.

I can never recollect a time when I did not sing; I believe I sang before I spoke: not that I possessed a voice of miraculous power, but that everything resolved itself into a species of inward rhythm not responsive to by words, but which passed into sound, tone, and measure before I knew it was formed. Every sight, as well as all that touched my ears, produced this effect. I could not watch the smoke ascending, nor the motions of the clouds, nor, subtler yet, the stars peeping through the vaulted twilight, without the framing and outpouring of exuberant emotion in strains so expressive to my own intelligence, that it was entranced by them completely. I was a very ailing child for several years, and only the cares I received preserved me then; but now I feel as if all healthfulness had been engendered by the mere vocal abstraction into which I was plunged a great part of every day. I had been used to hear music discussed, slightly it is true, but

always reverently, and I early learned there were those who followed that—the supreme of art—in the very town we inhabited; indeed my sisters had taken lessons of a lady, a pupil of Clementi, but she had left for London before I knew my notes.

Our piano had been a noble instrument, one of the first and best that displaced the harpsichords of Kirkman. Well worn, it had also been well used, and, when deftly handled, had still some delights extricable. It stood in our drawing-room —a chamber of the red brick house that held us, rather the envy of our neighbours, for it had a beautiful ceiling, carved at the centre and in the corners with bunches and knots of lilies; was a high and rather a large room. It was filled with old furniture, rather handsome and exquisitely kept, and was a temple of awe to me, because I was not allowed to play there, and only sometimes to enter it; as, for example, on Sundays, or when we had tea-parties, or when morning-callers came, and asked to see me; and whenever I did enter, I was not suffered to touch the rug with my feet, nor to approach the sparkling steel of the fire-irons and fender, nearer than its moss-like edge. Our drawing-room was in fact a curious confusion of German

stiffness and English comfort, but I did not know this then.

We generally sate in the parlour looking towards the street, and the square tower of an ancient church; the windows were draped with dark-blue moreen, and between them stood my mother's dark-blue velvet chair, always covered with dark-blue cloth, except on Sundays and on New Year's Day, and at the feast of Christmas.

The dark blue drugget covered a polished floor, whose slippery uncovered margin beneath the wainscot has occasioned me many a tumble, though it always tempted me to slide when I found myself alone in the room. There were plenty of chairs in the parlour, and a few little tables, besides a large one in the centre, over which hung a dark-blue cover, with a border of glowing orange. I was fond of the high mantelshelf, whose ornaments were a German model of a bad Haus, and two delicate wax nuns; to say nothing of the China candlesticks, the black Berlin screens, and the bronze pastille-box.

Of all things, I gloried in the oak closets, one filled with books, the other with glass and china, on either side of the fireplace; nor did I despise the

blue cloth stools beautifully embroidered by Clo just after her sampler days, in wool oak wreaths rich with acorns. I used to sit upon these alternately, at my mother's feet, for she would not permit one to be used more than the other; and I was a very obedient infant

My greatest trial was going to church, because the singing was so wretchedly bad, that it made my ears ache. Often I complained to my mother, but she always said, we could not help it if ignorant persons were employed to praise God; that it ought to make us more ready to stand up and sing, and answer our very best, and that none of us could praise Him really as the angels do. This was not anything of an answer, but I persisted in questioning her that I might see whether she ever caught a new idea upon the subject; but no! and thus I learned to lean upon my own opinion before I was eight years old, for I never went to church till I was seven. Clo thought that there should be no singing in church—she had a dash of the Puritan in her creed; but Lydia horrified my mother oftentimes by saying she should write to the organist about revising the choir. But here my childish wisdom crept in, and whispered to me,

that nothing could be done with such a battered, used up, asthmatic machine as our decrepit organ, and I gave up the subject in despair.

Still Millicent charmed me one night by silencing Fred and Mr. Hatchardson when they were prosing of Sternhold and Hopkins, and Tate and Brady, and singing-galleries and charity-children; by saying:

"You all forget that music is the highest gift which God bestows, and its faculty the greatest blessing. It must be the only form of worship for those who are musically endowed—that is if they employ it aright."

Millicent had a meek manner of administering a wholesome truth which another would have pelted at the hearer; but then Millicent spoke seldom, and never unless it was necessary. She read, she practised, she made up mantles and caps à ravir, and she visited poor sick people; but still I knew she was not happy, though I could not conceive nor conjecture why. She did not teach me anything, and Lydia would first have dreamed of scaling Parnassus; but Clo's honourable ambition had always been to educate me, and as she was really competent my mother made no ob-

jection. I verily owe a great deal to her. She taught me to read English, French, and German, between my eighth and tenth years, but then we all knew German in our cradles, as my mother had for us a nurse from her own land. Clo made me also spell by a clever system of her own, and she got me somehow into subtraction: but I was a great concern to her in one respect—I never got on with my writing. I believe she and my mother entertained some indefinite notion of my becoming, in due time, the junior partner of the Firm—this prescience of theirs appalled me not, for I never intended to fulfil it, and I thought justly enough that there was plenty of time before me to undo their arrangements. I always went to my lessons in the parlour from nine till twelve, and again in the afternoon for an hour; so that I was not overworked; but even when I was sitting by Clo—she, glorious creature, deep in Leyden or Gesenius—I used to chant my geography or my Telemachus to my secret springs of song, without knowing how or why, but still chanting, as my existence glided.

I had tolerable walks in the town and about through the dusty lanes, with my sisters or my

nurse; for I was curious, and to a child freshness is inspiration, and old sights seen afresh, seem new.

I liked of all things to go to the chemist's, when my mother replenished her little medicine-chest. There was unction in the smell of the packeted, ticketed drugs, in the rosy cinnamon, the golden manna, the pungent vinegar, and the aromatic myrrh. How I delighted in the copper weights, the spirit-lamp, the ivory scales, the vast magazines of lozenges, and the delicate lip-salve cases, to say nothing of the glittering toilette bagatelles, and perfumes and soaps. I mention all this just because the only taste that has ever become necessary to me in its cultivation, besides music, is chemistry; and I could almost say I know not which I adhere to most: but memory comes—

"And with her flying finger sweeps my lip."

I forbear.

I loved the factories, to some of which I had access. I used to think those wheels and whirring works so wonderful that they were like the inside of a man's brain. My notion was nothing pathetic of the pale boys and lank girls about; for they

seemed merely stirring or moveless parts of the mechanism. I am afraid I shall be thought very unfeeling; I am not aware that I was, nevertheless.

I sometimes went out to tea in the town; I did not like it, but I did it to please my mother. At one or two houses I was accustomed to a great impression of muffins, cake, and marmalade, with coffee and cream; and the children I met there did nothing adequately but eat. At a few houses, again, I fared better, for they only gave us little loaves of bread and little cups of tea, and we romped the evening long, and dramatized our elders and betters until the servants came for us. But I at least was always ready to go home, and glad to see my short wide bed beside my mother's vast one, and my spotless dimity curtains with the lucid muslin frills; and how often I sang the best tunes in my head to the nameless effect of rosemary and lavender that haunted my large white pillow.

We always went to bed, and breakfasted, very early, and I usually had an hour before nine wherein to disport myself as I chose. It was in these hours Millicent taught me to sing from

notes, and to discern the aspect of the key-board. Of the crowding associations, the teeming remembrances, just at infancy and early childhood, I reject all, except such as it becomes positively necessary I should recall; therefore I dwell not upon this phase of my life, delightful as it was, and stamped with perfect purity, the reflex of an unperverted temperament, and of kindly tenderness.

CHAPTER II.

We had a town-hall, a very imposing building of its class, and it was not five minutes' walk from the square-towered church I mentioned. It was, I well knew, a focus of some excitement at election-times and during the assizes, also in the spring when religious meetings were held there; yet I had never been in it, and seldom near it—my mother preferring us to keep as clear of the town proper as possible. Yet I knew well where it stood, and I had an inkling now and then that music was to be heard there: furthermore, within my remembrance, Millicent and Lydia had been taken by Fred to hear Paganini within its precincts. I was too young to know anything of the

triennial festival that distinguished our city as one of the most musical in England, at that time almost the only one, indeed, so honoured and glorified. I said, what I must again repeat, that I knew nothing of such a prospective or past event until the end of the summer in which I entered my eleventh year.

I was too slight for my health to be complete, but very strong for one so slight. Neither was I tall, but I had an innate love of grace and freedom, which governed my motions; for I was extremely active, could leap, spring, and run with the best, though I always hated walking. I believe I should have died under any other care than that expanded over me, for my mother abhorred the forcing system. Had I belonged to those who advocate excessive early culture, my brain would, I believe, have burst; so continually was it teeming. But from my lengthy idlenesses alternating with moderate action, I had no strain upon my faculties.

How perfectly I recollect the morning, early in autumn, on which the Festival was first especially suggested to me. It was a very bright day, but so chilly that we had a fire in the parlour grate, for

we were all disposed to be very comfortable as part of our duty. I had said all my lessons, and was now sitting at the table writing a small text copy in a ruled book, with an outside marbled fantastically brown and blue, which book lay, not upon the cloth of course, but upon an inclined plane, formed of a great leather case containing about a quire of open blotting-paper.

My sister Clotilda was over against me at the table, with the light shaded from her eyes by a green fan screen, studying, as usual in the morning hours, a Greek Testament full of very neat little black notes. I remember her lead-coloured gown, a rich washing silk, and her clear white apron, her crimson muffetees and short close black mittens, her glossy hair, rolled round her handsome tortoiseshell comb, and the bunch of rare though quaint ornaments—seals, keys, rings, and lockets—that balanced her beautiful English watch. What a treasure they would have been for a modern Chatelaine! my father having presented her with the newest, and an antique aunt having willed her the rest. She was very much like an old picture of a young person sitting there.

For my part I was usually industrious enough,

because I was never persecuted with long tasks; my attention was never stretched as it were upon a last, so that it was no meritorious achievement if I could bend it towards all that I undertook, with a species of elasticity peculiar to the nervous temperament. My mother was also busy. She sat in her tall chair at the window, her eyes constantly drawn towards the street, but she never left off working, being deep in the knitting of an enormous black silk purse for Lydia to carry when she went to market. Millicent was somewhere out of the room, and Lydia, having given orders for dinner, had gone out to walk.

I had written about six lines in great trepidation —for writing usually fevered me a little, it was such an effort; when my great goose quill slipped through my fingers thin as they were, and I made a desperate plunge into an O. I exclaimed aloud, "Oh! what a blot!"—and my lady Mentor arose and came behind me.

"Worse than a blot, Charles,"—she said, or something to that effect; "a blot might not have been your fault, but the page is very badly written; I shall cut it out, and you had better begin another."

"I shall only blot that, Clo;" I answered, and Clo appealed to my mother.

"It is very strange, is it not, that Charles who is very attentive generally, should be so little careful of his writing. He will never suit the post of all others the most important he *should* suit."

"What is that?" I enquired so sharply that my mother grew dignified and responded gravely.

"My dear Clotilda, it will displease me very much if Charles does not take pains in every point, as you are so kind as to instruct him. It is but little such a young brother can do to show his gratitude."

"Mother!" I cried, and sliding out of my chair, I ran to her's. "I shall never be able to write—I mean neatly; Clo may look over me if she likes, and she will know how hard I try."

"But do you never mean to write, Charles?"

"I shall get to write somehow I suppose, but I shall never write what you call a beautiful hand."

My mother took my fingers and laid them along her own, which were scarcely larger.

"But your hands are very little less than mine, surely they can hold a pen."

"Oh yes, I can hold anything," and then I

laughed and said, "I could do something with my hands too." I was going to finish, "I could play," but Lydia had just turned the corner of the street, and my mother's eyes were watching her up to the door. So I stood before her without finishing my explanation. She at length said, kindly. "Well now go and write one charming copy, and then we will walk."

I ran back to the table, and climbed my chair, Clo having faithfully fulfilled her word, and cut out the offending leaf.

But I had scarcely traced once "Do not contradict your Elders," before Lydia came in flushed and glowing, with a basket upon her arm. She exhibited the contents to my mother, who I suppose approved thereof, as she said they might be disposed of in the kitchen, and then with a sort of sigh began, before she left the room to remove her walking dress—

"Oh! it is hopeless, the lowest price is a guinea."

"I was fearful that it would be so, my dear girl," replied my mother in a tone of mingled condolence and authority she was fond of assuming; "it would be neither expedient nor

fitting that I should allow you to go, though I very much wish it, but should we suffer ourselves such an indulgence, we should have to deprive ourselves of comforts that are necessary to health, and thus to well-being. I should not like dear Millicent and yourself, young as you are, to go alone to the crowded seats in the Town Hall, and if I went with you we should be three guineas out of pocket for a month."

This was true; my mother's jointure was small, and though we lived in ease, it was by the exercise of an economy rigidly enforced and minutely developed. It was in my own place indeed I learned how truly happy does comfort render home, and how strictly comfort may be expressed by love from prudence, by charity from frugality, and by wit from very slender competence.

"I do not complain, dear mother," Lydia resumed in a livelier vein, "I ventured to ask at the office, because you gave me leave, and Fred thought there would be back seats lowered in price, or perhaps a standing gallery as there was at the last Festival. But it seems the people in the gallery made so much uproar last time, that the committee have resolved to give it up."

This was getting away from the point, so I put in "Is the Festival to be soon then, Lydia?"

"Yes, dear, it is only three weeks to-day to the first performance."

"Will it be very grand?"

"Oh yes, the finest and most complete we have ever had."

Then Lydia, having quite recovered her cheerfulness, went to the door, and speedily was no more seen. No one spoke, and I went on with my copy, but it was hard work for me to do so, for I was in a pricking pulsation from head to foot. It must have been a physical prescience of mental excitement, for I had scarcely ever felt so much before. I was longing, nay crazy to finish my page, that I might run out and find Millicent, who, child as I was, I knew could tell me what I wanted to hear better than any one of them. My eagerness impeded me, and I did not conclude it to Clo's genuine satisfaction after all. She dotted all my i's, and crossed my t's, though, with a condescending confession that I had taken pains—and then I was suffered to go; but it was walking-time, and my mother dressed me herself in her room, so I could not catch Millicent till we were fairly in the street.

CHAPTER III.

I DO not pretend to remember all the conversations verbatim which I have heard during my life, or in which I have taken a part, still there are many which I do remember word by word, and every word. My conversation that morning with Millicent I do not remember; its results blotted it out for ever, still I am conscious it was an exposition of energy and enthusiasm, for her's kindled as she replied to my ardent inquiries, and unknowingly she inflamed my own. She gave me a tale of the orchestra, its fulness and its potency; of the five hundred voices, of the Conductor, and of the assembly; she assured me that nothing could be

at all like it, that we had no conception of its resources or its effects.

She was melancholy, evidently, at first, but quite lost in her picturesque and passionate delineation; I all the while wondering how she could endure to exist and not be going. I felt in myself that it was not only a sorrow, but a shame to live in the very place and not press into the courts of music. I adored music even then, ay! not less than now, when I write with the strong heart and brain of manhood. I thought how easily Millicent might do without a new hat, a new cloak, or live on bread and water for a year. But I was man enough even then, I am thankful to say, to recall almost on the instant that Millicent was a woman, a very delicate girl too, and that it would never do for her to be crushed among hundreds of moving men and women, nor for Fred to undertake the charge of more than one—he had bought a ticket for his wife. Then I returned to myself.

From the first instant the slightest idea of the Festival had been presented to me, I had seized upon it personally with the most perfect con-

fidence. I had even determined how to go, for go I felt I must; and I knew if I could manage to procure a ticket, Fred would take me in his hand, and my mother would allow me to be disposed of in the shadow of his coat-tails; he was always so careful of us all. As I walked homewards I fell silent, and with myself discussed my arrangements; they were charming. The Town Hall was not distant from our house more than a quarter of a mile. I was often permitted to run little errands for my sisters, to match a silk, or to post a letter. My pecuniary plan was unique: I was allowed two pence a-week, to spend as I would, though Clo protested I should keep an account-book as soon as I had lived a dozen years. From my hatred of copper money I used to change it into silver as fast as possible, and at present I had five sixpences, and should have another by the end of another week. I was to take this treasure to the ticket office, and request whatever gentleman presided to let me have a ticket for my present deposit —and trust—I felt a certain assurance that no one would refuse me, I know not why, who had to do with the management of musical affairs. I was to leave my sixpences with my name and address, and

to call with future allowances until I had refunded all. It struck me that not many months must pass before this desirable end might accomplish itself.

I have often marvelled why I was not alarmed, nervous as I was, to venture alone into such a place, with such a purpose; but I imagine I was just too ignorant, too infantine in my notions of business. At all events I was more eager than anxious for the morrow, and only restless from excited hope. I never manœuvred before, I have often manœuvred since, but never quite so innocently, as I did to be sent on an errand the next morning. It was very difficult, no one *would* want anything, and at last in despair I very dexterously carried away a skein, or half a skein, of brown sewing silk, with which Lydia was hemming two elegant gauze veils for herself and for Millicent. The veils were to be worn that day I knew, for my mother had set her heart upon their excluding a "thought" of east in the autumnal wind, and there was no other silk; I managed to twist it into my shoe, and Lydia looked everywhere for it, even into the pages of Clo's book—greatly to her discomfiture. But in vain, and at last said Lydia, "Here, Charles, you must buy me another,"

handing me a penny. Poor Lydia! she did not know how long it would be before I brought the silk; but imagining I should be back *not* directly, I had the decency to transfer my pilfered skein to the under surface of the rug; for I knew that they would turn it up as usual in a search. And then, without having been observed to stoop, I fetched my beaver broad brimmer, and scampered out.

I scampered the whole way to the Hall. It was a chilly day, but the sun had acquired some power, and it was all summer in my veins. I believe I had never been in such a state of ecstasy. I was quite light-headed, and madly expected to possess myself of a ticket immediately, and dance home in triumph. The Hall! how well I remember it, looking very still, very cold, very blank; the windows all shuttered, the doors all closed. But never mind; the walls were glorious! They glittered with yellow placards, the black letters about a yard long announcing the day, the hour, the force,—the six foot long list of wonders and worthies. I was something disappointed not to find the ticket-office a Spanish castle, suddenly sprung from the stone-work of the Hall itself, but

it was some comfort that it was in St. Giles' street, which was not far.

I scampered off again—I tumbled down, having lost my breath—but I sprang again to my feet; I saw a perfect encampment of placards, and I rushed towards it. How like it was to a modern railway terminus, that ticket-office!—in more senses than one too. The door was not closed here but wide open to the street; within were green baize doors besides, but the outer entrance was crowded and those were shut—not for a minute together though, for I could not complain of quiet here. Constantly some one hurrying past nearly upset me, bustling out or pushing in. They were all men it is true; but was I a girl? Besides, I had seen a boy or two who had surveyed me impertinently, and whom I took leave to stare down. A little while I stood in the entry, bewildered, to collect my thoughts—not my courage—and then, endeavouring to be all calmness and self-possession, I staggered in. I then saw two enclosed niches, counter-like, the one had a huge opening, and was crammed with people on this side; the other was smaller, an air of eclecticism pervaded it; and

behind each stood a man. There was a staircase in front, and painted on the wall to its left I read —"Committee room upstairs; Ballotted places"— but then I returned to my counters and discovered, by reading also, that I must present myself at the larger for unreserved central seats. It was occupied so densely in front just now that it was hopeless to dream of an approach or appeal; I could never scale that human wall. I retreated again to the neighbourhood of the smaller compartment, and was fascinated to watch the swarming faces. Now a stream poured down the staircase, all gentlemen, and most of them passed out, nodding and laughing among themselves. Not all passed out. One or two strolled to the inner doors and peeped through their glass halves, while others gossipped in the entry. But one man came and, as I watched him, planted himself against the counter I leaned upon —the mart of the reserved tickets. He did not buy any though, and I wondered why he did not, he looked so easy, so at home there. Not that I saw his face, which was turned from me; it struck me he was examining a clock there was up on the staircase wall. I only noticed his boots, how bright they were, and his speckled trousers,

and that his hand which hung down was very nicely covered with a doeskin glove.

Before he had made out the time, a number of the stones in the human partition gave way at once—in other words I saw several chinks between the loungers at the larger counter. I closer clasped my sixpences, neatly folded in paper, and sped across the office. Now was my hour. I was not quite so tall as to be able to look over and see whom I addressed; nevertheless I still spoke up.

I said, "If you please, Sir, I wish to speak to you very particularly about a ticket."

"Certainly," was the reply instantly thrown down upon me, "One guinea, if you please."

"Sir, I wish to *speak* about one, not to buy it just this minute, and if you will allow me to speak"—I could not continue with the chance of being heard, for two more stones had just thrust themselves in and hid my chink, they nearly stifled me as it was, but I managed to escape, and stood out clear behind. I stood out not to go, but to wait; determined to apply again far more vigorously.

I listened to the rattling sovereigns as they

dropped, and dearly I longed for some of that money, though I never longed for money before or since. Then suddenly reminded, I turned, to see whether that noticeable personage had left the smaller counter. He was there. I insensibly moved nearer to him—so attractive was his presence, And as I believe in various occult agencies and physical influences, I hold myself to have been actually drawn towards him. He had a face upon which it was life to look, so vivid was the intelligence it radiated, so interesting was it in expression; and, if not perfect, so pure in outline. He was gazing at me too, and this no doubt called out of me a glance all imploring, as so I felt, yea, even towards him, for a spark of kindliest beam seemed to dart from under his strong dark lashes, and his eyes woke up; he even smiled just at the corners of his small, but not thin lips. It was too much for me. I ran across and again took my stand beside him. I thought, and I still think, he would have spoken to me instantly, but another man stepped up and spoke to him. He replied in a voice I have always especially affected—calm, and very clear, but below tone in uttering remarks not intended for the public. I did not hear a word. As soon as he

finished speaking, he turned and looked down upon me. And then he said, "Can I do anything for you?"

I was so charmed with his frank address, I quite gasped for joy; "Sir, I am waiting to speak to the man inside over there about my ticket."

"Shall I go across and get it?"

"Why no, Sir, I must speak to him—or if you would tell me about it."

"I will tell you anything—say on."

"Sir, I am very poor, and have not a guinea, but I shall have enough in time, if you will let me buy one with the money I have brought, and pay the rest by degrees."

I shall never forget the way he laid his hand on my shoulder, and turned me to the light, to scrutinize my developments I suspect; for he stayed a moment or two before he answered, "I do think you look as if you really wanted one, but I am afraid they will not understand such an arrangement here."

"I *must* go to the Festival," I returned, looking into his eyes, "I am so resolved to go; I will knock the door down if I cannot get a ticket. Oh! I will sell my clothes, I will do anything. If you

will get me a ticket, Sir, I will promise to pay you, and you can come and ask my mother whether I ever break my word."

"I am sure you always keep it, or you would not love music so earnestly; for you are very young to be so earnest," he responded, still holding me by the arm that thrilled beneath his kindly pressure; "will you go a little walk with me, and then I can better understand you, or what you want to do?"

"I won't go till I have got my ticket."

"You *cannot* get a ticket, my poor boy; they are not so easily disposed of. Why not ask your mother?"

"My sister as good as did; but my mother said it was too expensive."

"Did your mamma know how very much you wished it?"

"We do not say mamma, she does not like it, she likes 'liebe Mutter.'"

"Ah, she is German! Perhaps she would allow you to go, if you told her your great desire."

"No, sir, she told Lydia that it would put her out of pocket."

My new friend smiled at this.

"Now just come outside, we are in the way of many people here, and I have done my business since I saw that gentleman I was talking to, when you crept so near me."

"Did you know I wanted to come close to you, Sir?"

"Oh yes! and that you wanted to speak. I know the little violin face."

These words transported me. "Oh! do you think I am like a violin? I wish I were one going to the Festival."

"Alas! in that sense you are not one I fear."

I burst into tears, but I was very angry with myself, and noiselessly put my whole face into my handkerchief as we moved to the door. Once out in the street the wind speedily dried these dews of my youth, and I ventured to take my companion's hand. He glanced down at mine as it passed itself into his, and I could see that he was examining it. I had very pretty hands and nails, they were my only handsome point; my mother was very vain of them. I have found this out since I have grown up.

"My dear little boy, I am going to do a very daring thing."

"What is that, Sir?"

"I am going to run away with you; I am going to take you to my little house, for I have thought of something I can only say to you in a room. But, if you will tell me your name, I will carry you safe home afterwards, and explain everything to the 'liebe Mutter.'"

"Sir, I am so thankful to you that I cannot do enough to make you believe it. I am Charles Auchester, and we live at No. 14, Herne-street, at a red house, with little windows, and a great many steps up to the door."

"I know the house, and have seen a beautiful Jewess at the window."

"Everybody says Millicent is like a Jewess. Sir, do you mind telling me your name? I don't want to know it unless you like to tell it me."

"My name is not a very pretty one, Lenhart Davy."

"From David, I suppose?" I said quickly. My friend looked at me very keenly.

"You seem to think so at least."

"Yes, I thought you came from a Jew, like us; partly I mean. Millicent says we ought to be

very proud of it, and I think so too, because it is so very ancient and does not alter."

I perfectly well remember making this speech. Lenhart Davy laughed quietly, but so heartily it was delightful to hear him.

"You are quite right about that. Come, will you trust me?"

"Oh Sir, I should like to go above all things if it is not very far. I mean I must get back soon, or they will be frightened about me."

"You *shall* get back soon. I am afraid they are frightened now, do you think so? But my little house is on the way to yours, though you would never find it out."

He paused, and we walked briskly forwards.

CHAPTER IV.

TURNING out of the market-place, a narrow street presented itself; here were factories and the backs of houses. Again we threaded a narrow turning; here was an outskirt of the town. It fronted a vast green space; all building-ground enclosed this quiet corner, for only a few small houses stood about. Here were no shops, and no traffic. We went on in all haste, and soon my guide arrested himself at a little green gate. He unlatched it; we passed through into a tiny garden, trim as tiny, pretty as trim, and enchantingly after my own way of thinking. Never shall I forget its aspect; the round bed in the centre edged with box as green as moss; the big rose-tree in the middle of the

bed, and lesser rose-trees round; the narrow gravel walk, quite golden in the sun; the outer edge of box, and outer bed of heaths and carnations, and glowing purple stocks. But above all the giant hollyhocks, one on each side of a little brown door, whose little latticed porch was arched with clematis, silvery as if moonlight "Minatrost" were ever brooding upon that threshold.

I must not loiter here; it would have been difficult to loiter in going about the garden, it was so unusually small; and the house, if possible was more diminutive. It had above the door two tiny casement windows, only two; and as my guide opened the little door with a key he brought out of his pocket, there was nothing to delay our entrance. The passage was very narrow, but lightsome, for a door was open at the end, peeping into a lawny kind of yard. No children were tumbling about, nor was there any kitchen smell, but the rarest of all essences, a just perceptible cleanliness—not moisture, but freshness.

We advanced to a staircase about three feet in width, uncarpeted, but of a rich brown colour, like chestnut skins; so also were the balusters. About a dozen steps brought us to a proportionate land-

ing-place, and here I beheld two other little brown doors at angles with one another. Lenhart Davy opened one of these, and led me into a tiny room. Oh! what a tiny room! It was so tiny, so rare, so curiously perfect, that I could not help looking into it as I should have done into a cabinet collection. The casements were uncurtained, but a green silk shade, gathered at the top and bottom, was drawn half way along each. The walls were entirely books—in fact, the first thing I thought of was the book-houses I used to build of all the odd volumes in our parlour closet, during my quite incipient years. But such books as adorned the sides of the little sanctum were more suitable for walls than mine, in respect of size, being as they were, or as far as I could see, all music books, except in a stand between the casements, where a few others rested one against another. There was a soft grey druggett upon the floor; and though, of course, the book walls took up as much as half the room (a complete inner coat they made for the outside shell), yet it did not strike me as poking, because there was no heavy furniture—only a table, rather oval than round, and four chairs; both chairs and table of

the hue I had admired upon the staircase—a rich vegetable brown. On the table stood a square inkstand of the same wood, and a little tray filled with such odds as rubber, a penknife, sealing-wax, and a pencil. The wood of the mantelshelf was the same tone, and so was that of a plain piano that stood to the left of the fireplace, in the only nook that was not books from floor to ceiling; but the books began again over the piano. All this wood, so darkly striking the eye, had an indescribably soothing effect, (upon me I mean,) and right glad was I to see Mr. Davy seat himself upon a little brown bench before the piano, and open it carefully.

"Will you take off your hat for a minute or two, my dear boy?" he asked, before he did anything else.

I laid the beaver upon the oval table.

"Now, tell me, can you sing at all?"

"Yes, Sir."

"From notes, or by ear?"

"A great deal by ear, but pretty well by notes."

"*From* notes," he said, correctingly, and I laughed.

He then handed me a little book of chorales, which he fetched from some out of the way hole beneath the instrument. They were all German: I knew some of them well enough.

"Oh, yes, I can sing these, I think."

"Try 'Ein fester Burg ist unser Herr,' Can you sing alto?"

"I always do. Millicent says it is proper for boys."

He just played the opening chord slentando, and I began. I was perfectly comfortable, because I knew what I was about, and my voice, as a child's, was perfect. I saw, by his face, that he was very much surprised, as well as pleased. Then he left me alone to sing another, and then a third, but at last he struck in with a bass, the purest, mellowest, and most unshaken, I have ever heard, though not strong; neither did he derange me by a florid accompaniment he made as we went along. When I concluded the fourth, he turned, and took my hand in his.

"I knew you could do something for music, but I had no idea it would be so very sweetly. I believe you will go to the Festival, after all. You perceive I am very poor, or perhaps you do not

perceive it, for children see fairies in flies. But look round my ltttle room. I have nothing valuable except my books and my piano, and those I bought with all the money I had several years ago. I dare say you think my house is pretty. Well, it was just as bare as a barn when I came here six months ago. I made the shelves (the houses for my precious books) of deal, and I made that table, and the chairs, and this bench, of deal, and stained each afterwards; I stained my shelves too, and my piano. I only tell you this that you may understand how poor I am. I cannot afford to give you one of these tickets, they are too dear; neither have I one myself; but if your mother approves, and you like it, I believe I can take you with me to sing in the chorus."

This was too much for me to bear without some strong expression or other. I took my hat, hid my face in it, and then threw my arms round Lenhart Davy's neck. He kissed me as a young father might have done, with a sort of pride, and I was able to perceive he had taken an instant fancy to me. I did not ask him whether he led the chorus, nor what he had to do with it, nor what I should have to do, but I begged him joyously to take me

home directly. He tied on my hat himself, and I scampered all the way downstairs and round the garden before he came out of his shell. He soon followed after me, smiling; and though he asked me no curious question as we went along, I could tell he was nervous about something. We walked very fast, and in little less than an hour from the time I left home, I stood again upon the threshold.

CHAPTER V.

Of all the events of that marked day, none moved me more enjoyably than the sight of the countenances, quite petrified with amazement, of my friends in the parlour. They were my three sisters. Clo came forward in her bonnet, all but ready for a sortie, and though she bowed demurely enough, she began at me very gravely:

"Charles, I was just about to set out and search for you. My mother has already sent a servant. She herself is quite alarmed, and has gone up-stairs."

Before I could manage a reply, or to introduce Lenhart Davy, he had drawn out his card. He gave it to the "beautiful Jewess." Millicent took

it calmly, though she blushed, as she always did when face to face with strangers; and she motioned him to the sofa. At this very instant my mother opened the door.

It would not be possible for me to recover that conversation, but I remember how very refined was the manner, and how amiably deferential the explanation of my guide, as he brought out everything smooth and apparent even to my mother's ken. Lydia almost laughed in his presence, she was so pleased with him, and Millicent examined him stedfastly with her usually shrinking grey eyes. My mother I knew was displeased with me, but she even forgave me before he had done speaking. His voice had in it a quality (if I may so name it) of brightness—a metallic purity when raised; and the heroic particles in his blood seemed to start up and animate every gesture as he spoke. To be more explicit as to my possibilities, he told us that he was in fact a musical professor, though with little patronage in our town, where he had only a few months settled; that for the most part he taught and preferred to teach in classes, though he had but just succeeded in organizing the first. That his residence and

connection in our town were authorized by his desire to discover the maximum moral influence of music upon so many selected from the operative ranks, as should enable him by inference to judge of its moral power over those same ranks in the aggregate. I learned this afterwards of course, as I could not apprehend it then; but I well recall that his language even at that time bound me as by a spell of conviction, and I even appreciated his philanthropy in exact proportion to his personal gifts.

He said a great deal more, and considerably enlarged upon several points of stirring musical interest, before he returned to the article of the Festival. Then he told us that his class would not form any section of the chorus, being a private affair of his own, but that he himself should sing among the basses, and that it being chiefly amateur, any accumulation of the choral force was of consequence. He glanced expressly at my mother when he said:

"I think your little boy's voice and training would render him a very valuable vote for the altos, and if you will permit me to take charge of him at the rehearsals, and to exercise him once or

twice alone, I am certain Mr. St. Michel will receive him gladly."

"Is Mr. St. Michel the conductor, Mr Davy, then?" replied my mother with kindness, "I remember seeing him in Germany when a little theatre was opened in our village. I was a girl then and he very young."

"Yes, Madam; application was made to the wonderful Milans-André, who has been delighting Europe with his own compositions interpreted by himself; but he could not visit England at present, so St. Michel will be with us as on former occasions, and he is a good conductor, very steady, and understands rehearsal."

Let me here anticipate and obviate a question. Was not my mother afraid to trust me in such a mixed multitude, with men and women her inferiors in culture and position? My mother had never trusted me before with a stranger, but I am certain, at this distance of time, she could not resist the pure truthfulness and perfect breeding of Lenhart Davy, and was forced into desiring such an acquaintance for me. Perhaps, too, she was a little foolish over her last born, for she certainly did

indulge me in a quiet way, and with a great show of strictness.

As Lenhart Davy paused, she first thanked him, then rang the bell, was silent until she had ordered refreshment; sat still even then a few minutes, and presently uttered a deliberate consent. I could not bear it. I stood on one foot for an instant behind Clo's chair, and then flung myself into the passage. Once up stairs, I capered and danced about my mother's bed-room until fairly exhausted, and then I lay down on my own bed positively in my coat and boots, and kicked the clothes into a heap, until I cried. This brought me to, and I remembered with awe the premises I had invaded. I darted to my feet, and was occupied in restoring calm as far as possible to the tumbled coverlid, when I was horrified at hearing a step. It was only Millicent, with tears in her good eyes.

"I am so glad for you, Charles," she said, "I hope you will do everything in your power to show how grateful you are."

"I will be grateful to everybody," I answered, "but do tell me, is he gone?"

"Dear Charles, do not say '*he*' of such a man as Mr. Davy."

Now, Millicent was but seventeen, still she had her ideas, girlishly chaste and charming, of what men ought to be.

"I think he is lovely," I replied, dancing round and round her, till she seized my hands.

"Yes, Mr. Davy is gone, but he is kindly coming to fetch you to-morrow, to drink tea with him, and mother has asked him to dine here on Sunday. He showed her a letter he has from the great John Andernach, because mother said she knew him, and she says Mr. Davy must be very good, as well as very clever, from what Mr. Andernach has written."

"I know he is good! just think of his noticing *me!* I knew I should go! I said I would go!" and I pulled my hands away to leap again.

The old windows rattled, the walls shook, and in came Clo.

"Charles, my mother says if you do not keep yourself still, she will send a note after Mr. Davy. My dear boy, you must come and be put to rights. How rough your head is! what have you been doing to make it so?" and she marched me off; I

was quelled directly, and it was indeed very kind of them to scold me, or I should have ecstasised myself ill.

It was hard work to get through that day, I was so impatient for the next; but Millicent took me to sing a little in the evening, and I believe it sent me to sleep. I must mention that the Festival was to last three days. There were to be three grand morning performances, and three evening concerts; but my mother informed me she had said she did not like my being out at night, and that Lenhart Davy had answered, the evening concerts were not free of entrance to him, as there was to be no chorus, so he could not take me. I did not care. For now a new excitement, child of the first and very like its parent, sprang within my breast. To sing myself—it was something too grand—the veins glowed in my temples as I thought of my voice so small and thin, swelling in the cloud of song to heaven—my side throbbed and fluttered. To go was more than I dared to expect—but to be necessary to go was more than I deserved—it was glory.

I gathered a few very nice flowers to give Lenhart Davy, for we had a pretty garden behind

the house, and also a bit of a green-house in which Millicent kept our geraniums all the winter. She was tying up the flowers for me with green silk, when he knocked at the door, and would not come in, but waited for me outside. Amiable readers, every body was old-fashioned twenty years ago, and many somebodies took tea at five o'clock. Admirable economy of social life—to eat when you hunger, and to drink when you thirst! But it is polite to invent an appetite for made dishes, so we complain not that we dine at eight now-a-days; and it is politic too, for complexions are not what they used to be, and maiden heiresses with all their thousands, cannot purchase Beauty-Sleep! Pardon my disgression, while Davy is waiting at the door. I did not keep him so long, be certain. We set out. He was very much pleased with my flowers, and as it was rather a chilly afternoon he challenged me to a race. We ran together, he striding after me like a child himself in play, and snapping at my coat; I screaming all the while with exquisite sensation of pleasurable fun. Then I sped away like a hound, and still again he caught me and lifted me high into the air. Such buoyancy of spirits I never met with—such fluency of attitude

—I cannot call them or their effect animal. It was rather as if the bright wit pervaded the bilious temperament, almost misleading the physiologist to name it nervous. I have never described Lenhart Davy, nor can I, but to use the keener words of my friend Dumas, he was one of the men the most "significant" I ever knew.

CHAPTER VI.

ARRIVED at his house, that house just what a house should be—to the purpose in every respect—I flew in as if quite at home—I was rather amazed that I saw no woman-creature about, nor any kind of servant. The door at the end of the passage was still open, I still saw out into the little lawny yard, but nobody was stirring. "The house was haunted."—

I believe it; by a choir of glorious Ghosts.

"Dear alto, you will not be alarmed to be locked in with me I hope, will you?"

"Frightened, Sir? oh no, it is delicious." I most truly felt it delicious. I preceded him up the staircase, he remaining behind to lock the little door. I most truly felt it delicious. Allow

me again to allude to the appetite. I was very hungry, and when I entered the parlour I beheld such preparation upon the table as reminded me it is at times satisfactory as well as necessary to eat and drink. The brown inkstand and company were removed, and in their stead I saw a little tray of an oval form, upon which tray stood the most exquisite porcelain service for two I have ever seen. The china was small and very old—I knew that, for we were rather curious in china at home; and I saw how very valuable these cups, that cream-jug, those plates must be. They were of pearly clearness, and the crimson and purple butterfly on each rested over a sprig of honeysuckle entwined with violets.

"Oh, what beautiful china!" I exclaimed; I could not help it, and Lenhart Davy smiled.

"It was a present to me from my class in Germany."

"Did you have a class, Sir, in Germany?"

"Only little boys, Charlie, like myself."

"Sir, did you teach when you were a little boy?"

"I began to teach before I was a great boy, but I taught only little boys then."

He placed me in a chair while he left the room for an instant. I supposed he entered the next, for I heard him close at hand. Coming back quickly he placed a little spirit-lamp upon the table, and a little bright kettle over it; it boiled very soon. He made such tea! I shall never forget it, and when I told him I very seldom had tea at home, he answered, "I seldom drink more than one cup, myself, but I think one cannot hurt even such a nervous person as you are, and besides, tea improves the voice—did you know that?"

I laughed and drew my chair close to his. Nor shall I ever forget the tiny loaves, white and brown, nor the tiny pat of butter, nor the thin transparent biscuits, crisp as hoar-frost, and delicate as if made of Israelitish manna. Davy ate not much himself, but he seemed delighted to see me eat, nor would he allow me to talk.

"One never should," said he, "while eating."

Frugal as he was, he never for an instant lost his cheery smile and companionable manner, and I observed he watched me very closely. As soon as I had gathered up and put away my last

crumb, I slipped out of my chair and pretended to pull him from his seat.

"Ah! you are right, we have much to do."

He went out again, and returned laden with a wooden tray, on which he piled all the things and carried them down stairs. Returning he laughed and said,

"I must be a little put out to-night as I have a visitor, so I shall not clear up until I have taken you home."

"My mother is going to send for me, Sir, but I wish I might help you now."

"I shall not need help, I want it at least in another way; will you now come here?"

We removed to the piano. He took down from the shelves that overshadowed it, three or four volumes in succession. At length, selecting one, he laid it upon the desk and opened it. I gazed in admiration. It was a splendid edition in score of Pergolesi's 'Stabat Mater.' He gathered from within its pages a separate sheet—the alto part beautifully copied—and handed it to me, saying, "I know you will take care of it." So I did. We worked very hard, but I think I never enjoyed

any exercise so much. He premised with a cunning smile that he should not let me run on at that rate if I had not to be brushed up all in a hurry, but then, though I was ignorant, I was apt and very ardent. I sang with an entire attention to his hints, and though I felt I was hurrying on too fast for my "understanding," to keep pace with my "spirit," yet I did get on very rapidly in the mere accession to acquaintance with the part. We literally rushed through the Stabat Mater, which was for the first part of the first grand morning, and then for the other we began the 'Dettingen Te Deum.' I thought this very easy after the 'Stabat Mater,' but Davy silenced me by suggesting, "You do not know the difficulty until you are placed in the choir." Our evening's practice lasted about two hours and a half. He stroked my hair gently then, and said, he feared he had fatigued me. I answered by thanking him with all my might, and begging to go on. He shook his head.

"I am afraid we have done too much now. This day week the 'Creation,' that is for the second morning; and then, Charles, then, the 'Messiah,' last and best."

"Oh, the 'Messiah!' I know some of the songs;

at least, I have heard them; and are we to hear that? and am I to sing, in Hallelujah?' I had known of it from my cradle, and loving it *before* I heard it, how did I feel for it, when it was to be brought so near me! I think that this Oratorio is the most beloved of any by children and child-like souls. How strangely in it all spirits take a part!

Margareth, our ancient nurse, came for me at half-past eight. She was not sent away, but Davy would accompany us to our own door. Before I left his house, and while she was waiting in the parlour, he said to me, "Would you like to see where I sleep?" and called me into the most wonderful little room. A shower-bath filled one corner, there was a great closet one whole side, filled with every necessary, exactly enough for one person. The bed was perfectly plain, with no curtains and but a head-board, a mattrass looking as hard as the ground, and a very singular portrait over the head, of a gentleman, in line-engraving, which does not intellectualize the contour. This worthy wore a flowing wig and a shirt bedecked with frills.

"That is John Sebastian Bach," said Lenhart

Davy; "at least they told me so in Dresden. I keep it because it *means* to be him."

"Ah!" I replied; for I had heard the jaw-breaking name, which is dearer to many (though they, alas! too few, are scattered) than the sound of Lydian measures.

CHAPTER VII.

If I permit myself to pay any more visits to the nameless cottage, I shall never take myself to the Festival, but I must just say that we entertained Davy the next Sunday at dinner. I had never seen my mother enjoy anybody's society so much, but I observed he talked not so much as he listened to her, and this may have been the secret. He went very early, but on the Tuesday he fetched me again. It was not in vain that I sang this time either, my voice seemed to deliver itself from something earthly; it was joy and ease to pour it forth.

When we had blended the bass and alto of the 'Creation' chorusses, with a long spell at "The

Heavens are telling," Davy observed, "Now for the 'Messiah,' but you will only be able to look at it with me; to-morrow night is rehearsal at the Hall, and your mother must let you go." Rehearsal at the Hall! what words were those! they rang in my brain that night, and I began to grow very feverish. Millicent was very kind to me, but I was quite timid of adverting to my auspices; and I dared not introduce the subject, as none of them could feel as I did. My mother watched me somewhat anxiously; and no wonder, for I was very much excited. But when the morrow came, my self-importance made a man of me, and I was calmer than I had been for days.

I remember the knock which came about seven in the evening, just as it was growing grey. I remember rushing from our parlour to Lenhart Davy on the door-step. I remember our walk when my hands were so cold, and my heart was so hot, so happy. I remember the pale, pearly shade that was falling on street and factory—the shop-lit glare—the mail-coach thundering down High Street. I remember how I felt entering, from the dim evening, the chiaro oscuro of the corridors just uncertainly illustrated by a swinging lamp or two;

and I remember passing into the Hall. Standing upon the orchestra, giddy, almost fearful to fall forwards into the great unlighted chaos. The windows looked like clouds themselves, and every pillar, tier, and cornice, stood dilated in the unsubstantial space. Lenhart Davy had to drag me forwards to my nook among the altos beneath the organ, just against the conductor's desk. The orchestra was a dream to me, filled with dark shapes, flitting and hurrying, crossed by wandering sounds, whispers and laughter. There must have been four or five hundred of us up there, but it seemed to me like a lampless church, as full as it could be of people struggling for room.

Davy did not lose his hold upon me, but one and another addressed him, and flying remarks reached him from every quarter. He answered in his hilarious voice, but his manner was decidedly more distant than to me when alone with him. At last, some one appeared at the foot of the orchestra steps with a taper, some one or other snatched it from him, and in a moment a couple of candles beamed brightly from the Conductor's desk. It was a strange, candle-light effect, then. Such great, awful shadows threw themselves down the

Hall, and so many faces seemed darker than they had clustered in the glooming twilight. Again some hidden hand had touched the gas, which burst in tongues of splendour that shook themselves immediately over us; *then* was the orchestra a blaze defined as day—but still dark, and darkening like a vast abyss, lay the Hall before us; and the great chandelier was itself a blot, like a mystery hung in circumambient nothingness.

I was lost in the light around me, and striving to pierce into that mystery beyond, when a whisper thrilled me, "Now, Charles, I must leave you. You are Mr. Auchester at present. Stand firm and sing on. Look alone at the Conductor, and think alone of your part. Courage!" What did he say "courage" for? as if my heart could fail me then and there.

I looked stedfastly on. I saw the man of many years' service in the cause of Music looking fresh as any youth in the heyday of his primal fancy. A white-haired man, with a patriarchal staff besides, which he struck upon the desk for silence, and then raised, in calm, to dispel the silence.

I can only say, that my head swam for a few minutes, and I was obliged to shut my eyes before

I could tell whether I was singing or not. I was very thankful when somebody somewhere got out as a fugue came in, and we were stopped, because it gave me a breathing instant. But then again breathless—nerveless, I might say, for I could not distinguish my sensations—we rushed on, or I did, it was all the same; I was not myself yet. At length indeed it came, that restoring sense of self which is so precious at some times of our life. I recalled exactly where I was; I heard myself singing, felt myself standing; I was as if treading upon air, yet fixed as rock. I arose and fell upon those surges of sustaining sound, but it was as with an undulating motion, itself rest. My spirit straightway soared; I could imagine my own voice, high above all the others, to ring as a lark's above a forest, tuneful with a thousand tones more low, more hidden; the attendant harmonies sank as it were beneath me. I swelled above them. It was my first idea of Paradise.

And it is, perhaps, my last.

Let me not prose where I should most of all be poetical. The rehearsal was considered very successful. St. Michel praised us. He was a good old man, and, as Davy had remarked, very steady.

There was a want of unction about his conducting, but I did not know it, certainly not feel it, that night. The Messiah was more hurried through than it should have been, because of the late hour, and also because, as we were reminded, "it was the most generally known." Besides there was to be a full rehearsal with the band before the Festival, but I was not to be present—Davy considerately deeming the full effect would be lost for me, were it in any sense to be anticipated.

I feel I should only fail if I should attempt to delineate my sensations on the first two days of performance, for the single reason that the third morning of that festival annihilated the others so effectually, as to render me only master at this moment of its unparalleled incidents. *Those* I bear on my heart and in my life even to this very hour, and shall take them with me, yea, as a part of my essential immortality.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE second night I had not slept so well as the first, but on the third morning I was, nathless, extraordinarily fresh. I seemed to have lived ages, but yet all struck me in perfect unison as new. I was only too intensely happy as I left our house with Davy, he having breakfasted with us.

He was very much pleased with my atchievements. I was very much pleased with everything. I was saturated with pleasure. That day has lasted me, a Light, to this.—Had I been stricken blind and deaf afterwards, I ought not to have complained—so far would my happiness, in degree and nature, have outweighed any other I can imagine to have fallen to any other lot. Let those

who endure, who rejoice, alike pure in passion, bless God for the power they possess—innate, unalienable, intransferable,—of suffering all they feel.

I shall never forget that scene. The Hall was already crowded, when we pressed into our places, half an hour before the appointed commencement. Every central speck was a head, the walls were pillared with human beings, the swarm increased, floating into the reserved places, and a stream still poured on beneath the gallery.

As if to fling glory on music, not of its own, it was a most splendid day—the finest, warmest, and serenest we had had for weeks. Through the multitudinous panes the sky was a positive blaze of blue; the sunshine fell full upon the orchestra from the great arched window at the end of the vaulted building, and through that window's purple and orange border radiated gold and amethyst upon the countenances of the entering crowd. The hands of the clock were at the quarter now: we in the chorus wondered that St. Michel had not come; again they moved, those noiseless hands, and the "tongue" of iron told eleven. We all grew anxious. Still, as all the clocks in the town were

not alike, we might be the mistaken ones by ours. It now struck eleven though from the last church within our hearing, and there was not yet St. Michel. We were all in the chorus fitted in so nicely, that it would have been difficult for some to get out, or if out impossible to get in. They were all in the orchestra placed as closely as possible, amidst a perfect grove of music-stands. The reserved seats were full, the organist was seated, the score lay wide open upon the lofty desk; but St. Michel did not come!

I shall never forget how we wearied and wondered, and how I, at least, racked myself, writhed, and agonized. The door beneath the orchestra was shut, but every instant or two a hand turned the lock outside—one agitated face peeped in—then another—but were immediately withdrawn. I scarcely suppose the perfect silence lasted three minutes, it was like an electrical suspension, and as quickly snapped. The surcharging spleen of the audience began to break in a murmuring, humming, and buzzing, from centre to gallery. The confusion of forms and faces became a perfect dream, it dazzled me dizzy, and I felt quite sick. A hundred fans began to ply in the reserved

seats, the gentlemen bent over the ladies; the sound gathered strength and portentous significance from the non-explanatory calm of the orchestral force; but all eyes were turned, all chins lengthened towards the orchestra door. At precisely a quarter past eleven that door opened wide, and up came a gentleman in a white waistcoat. He stood somewhere in front, but he could not get his voice out at first. Oh, the hisses then! the shouts! the execrations! But it was a musical assembly, and a few cries of "Shame!" hushed the storm sufficiently to give our curiosity vent.

The speaker was a member of the committee, and very woe-begone he looked. He had to say (and it was of course his painful duty) that the unprecedented delay in the commencement of the performance was occasioned by an inevitable and most unexpected accident. Mr. St. Michel, in riding from his house a few miles out, had been thrown from his horse at the corner of the market-place, and falling on his right arm, had broken it below the elbow.

The suddenness of the event would account for the delay sufficiently: all means at present were

being employed to secure the services of an efficient resident professor, and it was trusted he would arrive shortly. Otherwise should there among the enlightened audience be present any professor able and willing to undertake the responsible office of Conductor, pro tempore, the committee would feel—— A hurricane of noes tore up the rest of the sentence in contempt, and flung it in the face of the gentleman in the white waistcoat. He still stood—It was well known that not a hand could be spared from the orchestra; but of course a fancy instantly clutched me, of Lenhart Davy. I looked up wistfully at him, among the basses, and endeavoured to persuade him with my eyes to come down. He smiled upon me and his eye was kindled; otherwise he seemed determined to remain as he was. Davy was very proud, though one of the most modest men I ever knew.

A fresh volley of hisses broke from the very heart of the hall, still it did not circulate, though the confusion seemed increasing in the centre, and it was at that very instant,—before poor Merlington had left his apologetic stand,—that a form, gliding light as if on air, appeared hovering on the steps at the side of the orchestra.

It was a man at least, if not a spirit; but I had not seen where that gliding form came from, with its light and stealthy speed.

Swift as a beam of morning he sprang up the steps, and with one hand upon the balustrade bowed to the audience—in a moment silence seemed to mantle upon the hall.

He stood before the score, and as he closed upon the time-stick those pointed fingers, he raised his eyes to the chorus and let them fall upon the band. Those piercing eyes recalled us. Every hand was on the bow, every mouthpiece lifted. There was still silence, but we "heard" no "voice." He raised his thin arm: the overture began. The curiosity of the audience had dilated with such intensity that all who had been standing still stood, and not a creature stirred. The calm was perfect upon which the "Grave" broke. It was not interpretation alone; it was inspiration. All knew that "Grave"—but few have heard it as it spoke that day. It was *then* we heard a voice—"a voice from heaven." There seemed not a string that was not touched by fire.

The tranquil echo of the repeat enabled me to bear it sufficiently to look up and form some

notion of him on whom so much depended. He was slight, so slight that he seemed to have grown out of the air. He was young, so young that he could not have numbered twenty summers;—but the heights of eternity were fore-shadowed in the forehead's marble dream.

A strange transparence took the place of bloom upon that face of youth, as if from temperament too tender, or blood too rarefied; but the hair betrayed a wondrous strength, clustering in dark curls of excessive richness. The pointed fingers were pale, but they grasped the time-stick with an energy like naked nerve.

But not until the violins woke up, announcing the subject of the allegro, did I feel fully conscious of that countenance absolved from its repose of perfection, by an excitement itself divine.

It would exhaust thought no less than words to describe the aspect of music, thus revealed, thus presented. I was a little child then, my brain was unused to strong sensation, and I can only say I remembered not how he looked after all was over. The intense impression annihilated itself, as a white dazzling fire struck from a smith's anvil dies without ashy sign. I have since learned to

discover, to adore, every express lineament of that matchless face: but then I was lost in gazing, in a spiritual ebbless excitement—then I was only conscious of the composition that he made one with himself, that became one with him.

The fire with which he led, the energy, the speed, could only have been safely communicated to an English orchestra by such accurate force. The perfection with which the Conductor was endued must surely have passed electrically into every player: there fell not a note to the ground; such precision was well nigh oppressive,—one felt some hand must drop.

From beginning to end of the allegro not a disturbing sound arose throughout the hall, but on the closing chord of the overture, there burst one deep toll of wonderful applause. I can only call it a toll; it was simultaneous. The Conductor looked over his shoulder and slightly shook his head. It was enough, and silence reigned as the heavenly symphony of the recitative trembled from those strings surcharged with fire. Here it was as if he whispered "Hush!" for the sobbing staccato of the accompaniment I never heard so low; it was silvery, almost awful. The bâton stirred languidly,

as the stem of a wind-swept lily, in those pointed fingers.

Nor would he suffer any violence to be done to the solemn brightness of the aria. It was not until we all arose that he raised his arm, and impetuously, almost imperiously, fixed upon us his eyes. He glanced not *a moment* at the score, he never turned a leaf, but he urged the time majestically, and his rapturous beauty brightened as the voices firmly, safely, swelled over the sustaining chords, launched in glory upon those waves of sound.

I almost forgot the Festival. I am not certain that I remembered who I was, or where I was, but I seemed to be singing at every pore. I seemed pouring out my life instead of my voice; but the feeling I had of being irresistibly borne along was so transporting, that I can conceive of nothing else like it, until after death.

CHAPTER IX.

THE chorus, I learned afterwards, was never recalled so proudly true, so perfect, so flexible; but it was not only not difficult to keep in, it was impossible to get out. So every one said among my choral contemporaries, afterwards.

I might recall how the arias told, invested with that same charm of subdued and softened fulness; I might name each chorus, bent to such strength by a might scarcely mortal; but I dare not anticipate my after-acquaintance with a musician who, himself supreme, has alone known how to interpret the works of others. I will merely advert to the extraordinary calm that pervaded the audience during the first part.

Tremendous in revenge, perfectly tremendous, was the uproar between the parts, for there was a pause and clearance for a quarter of an hour. I could not have moved for some moments if I had wished it; as it was I was nearly pressed to death. Everybody was talking; a clamour filled the air. I saw Lenhart Davy afar off, but he could not get to me. He looked quite white, and his eyes sparkled. As for me, I could not help thinking the world was coming to an end, so thirsty I felt, so dry, so shaken from head to foot. I could scarcely feel the ground, and I could not lift my knees, they were so stiff.

But still with infatuation I watched the Conductor, though I suffered not my eyes to wander to his face; I dared not look at him, I felt too awful. He was suddenly surrounded by gentlemen, the members of the committee. I knew they were there, bustling, skurrying, and I listened to their intrusive tones. As the chorus pressed by me I was obliged to advance a little, and I heard, in a quiet foreign accent, delicate as clear, these words: "Nothing, thank you, but a glass of pure water."

Trembling, hot, and dizzy, almost mad with im-

patience, I pushed through the crowd; it was rather thinner now, but I had to drive my head against many a knot, and when I could not divide the groups I dived underneath their arms. I cannot tell how I got out, but I literally leaped the stairs; in two or three steps I cleared the gallery. Once, in the refreshment room, I snatched a glass jug that stood in a pail filled with lumps of ice, and a tumbler, and made away with them before the lady who was superintending that table had turned her head. I had never a stumbling footstep, and though I sprang back again, I did not spill a drop. I knew the hall was half empty, so taking a short way that led me into it, I came to the bottom of the orchestra. I stood the tumbler upon a form, and filling it to the brim left the beaker behind me, and rushed up the orchestra stairs.

He was still there, leaning upon the score, with his hands upon his face and his eyes hidden. I advanced very quietly, but he heard me, and without raising himself from the desk let his hands fall, elevated his countenance, and watched me as I approached him.

I trembled so violently then, taken with a fresh

shudder of excitement, that I could not lift the tumbler to present it. I saw a person from the other side advancing with a tray, and dreading to be supplanted, I looked up with desperate entreaty. The unknown stretched his arm and raised the glass, taking it from me, to his lips. Around those lips a shadowy half-smile was playing, but they were white with fatigue or excitement, and he drank the water instantly, as if athirst.

Then he returned to me the glass, empty, with a gentle but absent air, paused one moment, and now, as if restored to himself, fully regarded me, and fully smiled.

Down-gazing those deep-coloured eyes upon me seemed distant as the stars of heaven; but there was an almost pitying sweetness in his tone as he addressed me. I shall never forget that tone, nor how my eyelids quivered with the longing want to weep.

"It was very refreshing," he said. "How much more strengthening is water than wine! Thank you for the trouble you took to fetch it. And you, you sang also in the chorus. It was beautifully done."

"May I tell them so, Sir?" I asked him, eagerly, without being able to help speaking in *some* reply.

"Yes, every one, but, above all the little ones,"—and again he faintly smiled.

Then he turned to the score, and drooping over the desk, seemed to pass back into himself, alone, by himself companioned. And in an agony of fear lest I should intrude for a moment even, I sped as fast as I had entered, from his mysterious presence.

To this hour I cannot find in my memory the tone in which he spoke that day. Though I have heard that voice so often since—have listened to it in a trance of life—I can never realise *it;* it was too unearthly, and became part of what I shall be, having distilled from the essence of my being, as I am.

Well, I came upon Lenhart Davy in one of the passages, as I was running back. I fell, in fact, against him, and he caught me in his arms.

"Charles Auchester! where have you been? You have frightened me sorely. I thought I had lost you, I did indeed, and have been looking for you ever since we came out of the hall."

As soon as I could collect enough of myself to put into words, I exclaimed ecstatically, "Oh, Mr. Davy! I have been talking to the man in the orchestra!"

"You have, indeed, you presumptuous atomy!" and he laughed in his own way, adding, "I did not expect you would blow into an hero quite so soon. And is our hero up there still? My dear Charles, you must have been mistaken, he must be in the committee room."

"No, I was not. The idea of my mistaking! as if anybody else could be like him! He is up there now, and he would not come down, though they asked him; and he said he would only drink a glass of water, and I heard him, for I waited to see, and I fetched it, and he drank it,—there!" and I flung myself round Davy again, almost exhausted with joy.

"And he spoke to you, did he, Charles? My own little boy, be still, or I shall have to fetch *you* a glass of water. I am really afraid of all this excitement, for which you seem to come in naturally."

"So I do, Mr. Davy; but do tell me who is that man?"

"I cannot tell," said Davy, himself so flushed now that I could hardly think him the same person,—"unless, by some extraordinary chance, it may be Milans-André."

"No! no!" exclaimed one of our contemporaries, who, in returning to the orchestra, overheard the remark. "No! no! it is not Milans-André. Mr. Hermann, the leader, has seen Milans-André in Paris. No, it is some nobleman they say, a German prince. They all know Handel in Germany."

"Nonsense!" replied Davy: "they don't know Handel better in Germany, than we do in England;" but he spoke as if to me, having turned from the person who addressed him.

"Don't they, Mr. Davy? But he does look like a prince."

"Not a *German* prince, my Charlie! He is more like one of your favourite Jews; and that is where it is, no doubt."

"Davy! Davy!" exclaimed again another, one of the professors in the town. "Can it be Milans-André?"

"They say not, Mr. Westley. I do not know myself, but I should have thought Mons. André

must be older than this gentleman, who does not look twenty."

"Oh, he is more than twenty."

"As you please," muttered Davy, merrily, as he turned again to me. "My boy, we must not stand here; we shall lose our old places. Do not forget to remain in your's when it is over, till I come tof etch you."

When it is over! Oh cruel Lenhart Davy! to remind me that it would ever end. I felt it cruel then, but perhaps I felt too much; I always do, and I hope I always shall.

Again marshalled in our places (I having crept to mine), and again fitted in very tightly, we all arose. I suppose it was the oppression of so many round me standing, superadded to the strong excitement, but the whole time the chorus lasted, "Behold the Lamb of God," I could not sing. I stood and sobbed, but even then I had respect to Davy's neatly copied alto sheet, and I only shaded my eyes with that and wept upon the floor. Nobody near observed me; they were all singing with all their might; I alone dared to look down, ever down, and weep upon the floor.

Such tears I never shed; they were as necessary

as dew after a cloudless day, and, to pursue my figure, I awoke again at the conclusion of the chorus to a deep rapturous serenity, pure as twilight, and gazed upward at the stars, whose "smile was Paradise," with my heart again all voice.

I believe the chorus, "Lift up your heads!" will never again be heard in England as it was heard then, and I am quite certain of the Hallelujah. It was as close, as clear, and the power that bound the band, alike constrained the chorus; both seemed freed from all responsibility, and alone to depend upon the will that swayed, that stirred, with a spell real as supernatural, and sweet as strange.

Perhaps the most immediate consequence of such faultless interpretation was the remarkable stillness of the audience. Doubtless a few there were who were calm in critical pique, but I believe the majority dared not applaud, so decided had been the negative of that graceful sign at the commencement of the performance; besides a breathless curiosity brooded, as distinctly to be traced in the countenances of the crowd, as in their thrilling quietude. For thrilling it was indeed, though not so thrilling as the outbreak, the tem-

pest out-rolling of pent-up satisfaction at the end of the final chorus. That chorus (it was well indeed it was the last) seemed alone to have exhausted the strength of the Conductor, his arm suddenly seemed to tire, he entirely relaxed, and the delicate but burning hectic on each cheek alone remained, the seal of his celestial passion.

He turned as soon as the applause, instead of decreasing, persisted; for at first he had remained with his face towards the choir. As the shouts still reached him, and the sea of heads began to fluctuate, he bent a little in acknowledgment, but nevertheless preserved the same air of difference and abstraction from all about, beneath him. Lingering only until the way was cleared below the orchestra steps, he retreated down them even before the applause had ceased; and before any one could approach him, without addressing any one, he left the hall.

And of him nothing afterwards was heard; I mean at that time. Not a soul in the whole town had learned his name, and the hotel at which he had slept the night before was in vain attacked by spies on every errand. The landlord could only say what he knew himself, that he was a stranger

who had visited the place for the purpose of attending the Festival, and who having fulfilled that purpose, had left the city unknown, unnamed, as he entered it.

I believe most children of my age would have had a fit of illness after an excitement of brain and of body so peculiar; but perhaps had I been less excited I should have been worse off afterwards. As it was, the storm into which I had been wrought subsided of itself and I was the better for it just as nature is said to be after her disturbances of a similar description. Davy took me home, and then set off to his own house where he always seemed to have so much to do; and all my people were very kind to me in listening, while I, more calmly than any one would believe, expatiated upon our grand adventure. I was extremely amused to see how astonished Clo was to find me so reasonable, for her only fear had been, she informed my mother, that Charles would not settle to anything for weeks if he were allowed to go. And Millicent was very much astonished that I spoke so little of the performance itself. I could only defend myself by saying, "If you had seen him you would not wonder."

"Is he handsome, Charles?" said Lydia, innocently, with her brown eyes fixed upon her thimble (which she held upon her finger, and was shocked to perceive a little tarnished). I was so angry that I felt myself turn quite sick, but I was good enough only to answer—"*You* would not think so." For so I believed. Millicent softly watched me and added, "Charlie means, I think, that it was a very beautiful face."

"I do," I said bluntly, "I shall never see a beautiful face again. You will never see one at all, as you have not seen *that*."

"Pity us then, Charles," replied Millicent in her gentlest voice.

I climbed upon her lap. "Oh no dear! it is you who must pity me, because you do not know what it is, and I do, and I have lost it."

Lydia lifted her eyes, and made them very round, but as I was put to bed directly, nobody heard any more of me that night.

CHAPTER X.

It was very strange, or rather it was just natural, that I should feel so singularly low next day. I was not exactly tired, and I was not exactly miserable. I was perfectly blank like a sunless Autumn day, with no wind about. I lay very late in bed, and as I lay there I no more believed the events of yesterday than if they had been a dream. I was literally obliged to touch myself, my hair, my face, and the bed-clothes, before I could persuade myself that I was not myself a dream. The cold bath restored me, into which I daily sprang summer and winter alike, but I grew worse again after breakfast.

Yearning to re-excite myself in some fashion, I marched into the parlour and requested Clo to teach me as usual. There she was, in her grey silk gown, peering (with her short sightedness) into Herodotus; but though all my books were placed upon the table by her, I could tell very easily that she had not expected me and was very much pleased I should come. Her approbation overcame me, and instead of blotting my copy with ink, I used my tears. They were tears I could no more have helped shedding than I could have helped breathing. Clo was very kind, she looked at me solemnly, not severely, and solemnly administered the consolation that they were the effect of excitement. I did not think so, I thought they were the effect of a want of excitement, but I said nothing to her.

I overcame them, and was quiet for the rest of the day, and for several days, but imagine what I suffered when I saw no more of Lenhart Davy. As the world in our house went on just the same as before the Festival, and as I had no hand in keeping the house so charmingly, nor any part in committees for dinner, nor in pickling speculations,

I was fairly left to myself with my new discovery about myself, namely, that I must be a musician, or I should perish.

Had I only seen Lenhart Davy, I could have told him all. I believe my attraction towards him was irresistible, or I should never have thought of him while he stayed away; it would have hurt me too much. For I was painfully, may be, vainly sensitive. I was not able to appreciate his delicacy of judgment as well as feeling, in abstaining from any further communication with us until we ourselves reminded him of us. I had no hope, and the four or five days I have mentioned as passing without his apparition, seemed to annihilate my future. I quite drooped, I could not help it, and my mother was evidently anxious. She made me bring out my tongue a dozen times a-day, and she continually sighed as if reproaching herself with something. How long it seemed! quite four months as I used to reckon—I never once alluded to Lenhart Davy; but others did, at least not Millicent, but Lydia and my eldest sister. Lydia made the observation that perhaps he was too modest to come without a special invitation, but

Clo hurt me far more, by saying that he had no doubt better engagements elsewhere. On the evening of the fifth day, I was sitting upon the stool in the parlour by the window, after tea, endeavouring to gather my wandering fancies to "Simple Susan," her simple woes, pleasures, and loves, (for Clo was there, and I did not wish to be noticed)—when Millicent came into the room and said my mother wished to speak to me upstairs. I went out with Millicent—"What does she want? —I mean mother," I enquired, no doubt rather peevishly.

"She wants to ask you a question you will like to answer, Charles."

"Shall I?—what is it? I don't think I shall like to answer any question—Oh Millicent!" and I hid my small face in the folds of her dark blue frock.

"Come Charles! you know I would not deceive you. Darling! you must not feel so much."

And she stooped to kiss me, smiling, though the tears were in her eyes. I still persisted in hiding my head, and when we reached the door of the dressing-room, I went in crying. My mother sat

in a great white chair beside the fire, next her stood a small table covered with hose, the hose of the whole household.

"How Charles! how now! Be a man, or at least a boy, or I am sure I had better not ask you what I sent for you to answer. Come say, would you like to sing in Mr. Davy's class? You must not give up your old lessons, nor must you forget to take great pains to write, to cipher, and to read as well, but I think you are very fond of singing since you found your voice, and Mr. Davy to whom I wrote says you can be of use to him, and that he will be so very good as to teach you what he teaches the others, to understand what you sing."

Dear Millicent! I knew I owed it all to her, for there had been that in her face, her manner, and her kind eyes that told me she had felt for me in my desolation, and now as she stood apart from my mother and me, I ran to her and told her so, that I knew it all. I will not dwell upon the solicitude of Clo, lest I should become unmanageable in the midst of my satisfaction, nor upon Lydia's amazement at my mother's allowing me to join the class, but I well recollect how Millicent kept fast by me; her will as it were upon mine, and her

reminding calmness ever possessing me, lest I should by my ecstatic behaviour forfeit my right to my new privileges. I was quite good enough, though, in the general opinion, to be permitted to go as arranged, on the following Tuesday evening.

Lenhart Davy dined with us on Sunday by special invitation, written by my mother, conveyed by Margareth. He told me then that I must not mistake his silence if he spoke not to me nor noticed me when he was amidst his pupils. I perfectly understood even then how much depended upon his sagacious self-dependence.

The class assembled from six till eight in the evening, twice a week: the room Davy convoked it in, was one he hired expressly. My mother sent me with Margareth who was to fetch me again at the expiration of two hours, at least during the winter which was fast approaching.

And thus had it not been for the Festival, I should have been at once initiated into "Choral Life."

Though indeed, but for that glorious time, and my own fantastic courage, first-fruit of a musical temperament, I had perhaps never been taught to give that name where I can now bestow none

other; so completely has choral worship passed into my life.

When Margareth left me at the door of a house I had never entered—though I knew it well, for it was let out in auction-rooms, for committees, and the like—I felt far more wild and lost than when I attended the grand rehearsal hand in hand with Lenhart Davy. He was my master though, I remembered this, and also that he expected a great deal of me, for he had told me so, and that he had appointed me a high place among the altos. I had my numbered ticket in my hand and upon it my name, and I showed it to a man who was standing above at the top of the steep staircase. He looked at it, nodded, and pushed me in.

The room was tolerably large and high, and lighted by gas-burners which fully illustrated the bareness of wall, and floor, and ceiling. Accustomed to carpets in every chamber, nay in every passage, I was horrified to hear my own footfall upon the boards, as I traversed the backs of those raised forms one above the other full of people. Boys and men, and women and girls, seemed all mixed up together, and all watching me; for I was late, and quite dreamy with walking through the

twilight town. Several beckoning hands were raised as I inquired for the place of the altos, and I took my seat just where a number nailed to the form answered to the number on my ticket.

CHAPTER XI.

I WAS too satisfied to have found my way safely in, and too glad to feel deposited somewhere, to gaze round me just then; but a door opened with a creaking hinge on the ground floor below, and as perfect in my eyes as ever, stepped forth Lenhart Davy, and bowed to his whole class. He carried a little time-stick in his hands, but nothing else, and as he placed himself in front, immediately beneath the lowest form, I was conscious, though I believe no one else present could be, of the powerful control he had placed as a barrier between himself and those before him; between his active and his passive being.

He began to address us in his fine, easy tones, in

language pure enough for the proudest intellect, sufficiently simple for the least cultured ear; and he spoke chiefly of what he had said the time before, recapitulating, and pausing to receive questions or to elicit answers. But all he said, whatever it was to others, was to me a highly spiritual analysis of what most teachers endeavour to lower and to explain away—the mystery and integrity of the musical Art.

He touched very lightly upon theory, but expounded sounds by signs in a manner of his own which it is not necessary to communicate, as its results were those of no system whatever, but was applied by wisdom, and enforced by gradual acquaintance.

We did not begin to sing for at least half an hour, but he then unlocked a huge closet, drew forth an enormous board, and mapped thereon in white chalk the exercises of his own preparation for our evening's practice. These were pure, were simple, as his introductory address.

As I have said, the class was only just organized, but it was not a very small one; there must have been sixty or seventy present that night. I was in the topmost row of altos, and as soon as we began

to sing, I was irresistibly attracted to those about me; and to identify them with their voices was for me a singular fascination. I was but the fourth from the wall on my side, and a burner was directly above me. I took advantage of the light to criticise the countenances of my nearer contemporaries, who were all absorbed in watching our master's evolutions. I could not look at him until I had acquainted myself with my locality, as far as I could without staring, or being stared at. Next the wall, two boys (so alike that they could only have been brothers) nestled and bawled; they were dark-hued, yet sallow, and not inviting. I concluded they came from some factory, and so they did, but they did not please me enough to detain my attention—they were beneath my own grade. So was a little girl nearest to them, and next to me, but I could not help regarding her. She had the most imperturbable gaze I ever met—great eyes of a yellow hazel, with no more expression in them than water—but her cheeks were brightly coloured, and her long auburn hair was curled to her waist.

An ease pervaded her that was more than elegance. She leaned and she lounged, singing in

a flexible voice, without the slightest effort, and as carelessly as she looked. She wore a pink gingham frock, ill made to a degree, but her slender figure moved in and out of it like a reed; her hands were fitted into discoloured light kid gloves, and she had on an amber necklace. This alone would have disgusted me, if she had not looked so unconcerned, so strange, and if I had not thought her hair so very pretty; but I did, and, as I have said, I could not avoid regarding her. She had her bonnet in her lap (a bruised muslin one, with tumbled satin strings) and I was surveying it rather closely, when she turned upon me, and whispered loud, not low, (and then went on singing herself, instantly,) "Why don't you sing?" Scared and shocked, I drew myself away from her as far as possible, and moved my eyes to my other neighbour. It was a girl, too; but I instantly felt the words, "young lady" to be appropriate, though I knew not wherefore, except that she was, as it were, so perfectly self-possessed. She must be older than I am (it occurred to me), but I could not tell how much. She was, in fact, about fourteen.

It was some relief to look upon her, after being

attacked by the quick little being on my right hand, because she seemed as utterly indisposed to address me, as the other had been determined. She did not seem even to see me, nor give the least glance at anybody, or anything, except Lenhart Davy and his board. Upon them she fastened her whole expression, and she sang with assiduous calmness. So, though I sang too, fearing my friend would observe my silence, I turned quite towards my young lady, and watched her intensely—she noticing me no more than she would have noticed a fly walking upon the wall, or upon Lenhart Davy's board. I was very fastidious then, whatever I may be now, and I seldom gazed upon a face for the pleasure of seeing it. In this instance, I experienced a feeling beyond pleasure, so exquisitely did the countenance beside me, harmonize with something in myself. Not strictly fine, nor severely perfect in outline or of hue, this sweet face shone in glory not its own: the most ardent musical intention lay upon the eyes, the lips, the brow; and the deep lashes themselves seemed born to shade from too much brightness a beholder, like myself.

I thought her a young woman, and so she was,

compared with my age, at least; but my awe, and her exaltation were measured by a distant self-possession towards me, towards all. She was not dressed with much more costliness than my wild little rebuker, but her plain black frock fitted her beautifully, and her dark gloves, and the dark ribbon on her hat, and her little round muff satisfied me as to her gentle and her womanly pretensions.

In linking these adjectives you will realize one of my infatuations wherever they are substantively found. Enough; I dared not leave off singing, and my voice was rather strong, so I could not clearly decide upon her's, until Davy wrote up a few intervals for unisons, which very few of us achieved on the instant,—my calm companion was among those who did. Her voice was more touching than any I had ever heard and a true contralto; only more soft than deep, more distilling than low. But unknowing as I was, I was certain she had sung, and had learned to sing, long before she had joined the class; for in her singing there was that purified quality which reminds one (it did me) of filtered water, and she pronounced most skilfully the varied vocables. I felt afterwards that she

must have been annoyed at my pertinacious scrutiny, but she betrayed not the remotest cognizance of me or my regards; and this indifference compelled me to watch her far more than sympathetic behaviour would have done. That evening seemed long to me while we were at work, but I could not bear the breaking-up. I had become, as it were, connected with my companions, though we had not exchanged a word. I was rather disposed to wait and see who would join my little girl with her wild eyes, and my serene young lady. I believe I should have done so, but Lenhart Davy kindly came up from below and shook hands with me, and while I was receiving and returning his greeting, they were lost in the general crowd.

He took me himself down stairs to Margareth, who was awaiting me with a cloak and a comforter in a little unfurnished room; and then he himself departed, looking very tired.

CHAPTER XII.

I DID not see him again until the next class-night. It was strange to find the same faces about me, and above all my two heroines, dressed exactly as on the first occasion, except that the pink frock was rather less brilliant. I listened eagerly for those pure tones to swell, communing with my own, and I was not disappointed. We did not sing anything that I can specify at present; but it was more than pleasure, it was vitality to me, to fling out my own buoyant notes far and wide, supported, as it were, by an atmosphere of commingling sounds. I suppose, therefore, that I may have been singing very loud, when the daring little

head out of the muslin bonnet put itself into my face and chanted, in strict attention to Davy's rules all the time, "How beautifully you do sing!" I was hushed for the moment, and should have been vexed if I had not been frightened, for I was ridiculously timorous as a child.

She then brought from the crown of her bonnet a paper full of bonbons, which she opened and presented to me. I replied very sharply in a low voice, "I don't eat while I am singing;" and should have taken no more notice of her, but she now raised upon me her large eyes to the full, and still pushed the bonbon paper at me—almost in my face too. I was too well bred to push it away, but too honest not to say, when she still persisted in offering the saccharine conglomeration, "I don't like curl papers." The child turned from me with a fierce gesture, but her eyes were now swimming in tears. I was astonished, angry, melted. I at length reproached myself; and though I could not bring myself to touch the coloured chocolates, crumpled up as they had been in her hand, I did condescend to whisper, "Never mind!" and she took out her handkerchief to wipe her eyes.

Now all this while my young lady took no

heed, and I felt almost sure she must have noticed us; but she did not turn to the large-eyed maiden, and *I* occupied myself with both. That night again Davy joined me, and I only managed to catch a glimpse of the muslin bonneted, holding her bonbons still in one dirty glove, and with the other taking the hand of a huge high-shouldered man going out with the crowd.

Oh! Davy was too deep for me, and delicate as deep! The next night of our meeting, my number was moved to the other side of my serene neighbour, who at present divided me from the hazel eyes and the ringlets. It never occurred to me that *he* had done it; I thought it to be a mistake, and fully intended like a curious manikin, to go back another time to my old quarters. I could not help looking at the little one to see whether I was watched, but no; with a coquetry I was too young to appreciate, and she ought to have been too young to exercise, she sang with all her might; never once turning her eyes towards me. I found at length the fascinations of our choral force too strong not to submerge her slight individuality, and soon I forgot she was there, though I never forgot that serene voice breathing by my side faint

prophecies I could not render to myself in any form, except that they had to do with myself, and with music alike my very own. I do not think any musical taste was ever fed and fostered early in an atmosphere so pure, as mine; for Lenhart Davy's class when fully organized and entirely submitted to him, seemed invested with his own double peculiarity—subdued, yet strong. We were initiated this evening into an ancient anthem whose effect, when it was permitted to us to interpret, was such that I could not repress my satisfaction, and I said aloud though I did not confront my companion, "That is something like!" My serene contralto answered, strangely to my anticipations, and with the superior womanliness I have ascribed to her, "Is it not glorious?"

It was an anthem in the severe style, that tells so powerfully in four-voiced harmony, and the parts were copied upon gigantic tablets in front, against the wall that was Davy's background.

"I cannot see," said the other little creature, pulling the contralto's black silk gown.

"I am sorry for you," replied the other—"but I believe that you can see, Laura, as well as I can;

you mean you will not trouble yourself, or that you are idle to-night."

"And what if I do? I hate those horrid hymn sort of tunes, they will not be of any use to me?"

"Silence!" uttered the voice of Lenhart Davy—there was seldom occasion for him to say so, but just now there had been a pause before we repeated the first movement of the anthem.

He told me he had a little leisure that evening and would take me home. I was enchanted, and fully meant to ask him to come in with me, but I actually forgot it until after he had turned away. Margareth reproved me very seriously, "Your sisters would have asked him in, master Charles, to supper." But the fact was I had been occupied with my own world too much. I had said to him directly we were in the street, "Dear Mr. Davy, who are those two girls whose seats are the nearest to mine?"

"They belong to the class like yourself, as you perceive, but they are not persons you would be likely to meet anywhere else."

"Why not, Sir? I should like to be friends with all the singers."

Davy smiled: "So you may be, in singing, and, I hope, will be; but they are not all companions for you *out* of the class. You know that very well."

"I suppose, Sir, you mean that some are poorer than we are, some not so well brought up, some too old, and all that?"

"I did, certainly; but not only so. You had better not make too many friends at your time of life—rather too few than too many. Ask your mother if I am not correct. You see she has a right to expect that you should love home best at present."

"I always should love *home* best," I answered quickly, and I remember well how Davy sighed

"You mean what even every boy must feel, that you should like to make a home for yourself; but the reward is after the race—the victory at the end of the struggle."

It appeared to me very readily that he here addressed something in his own soul, for his voice had fallen. I urged—"I know it, Sir; but do tell me the names of those two girls—I won't let them know you told me."

He laughed long and heartily. "Oh yes, willingly; you would soon have heard their names though.

The little one is Laura Lemark, the child of a person who has a great deal to do with the theatres in this town, and she is training for a dancer, besides being already a singer in the chorus at a certain theatre. Your mother would not like you to visit her, you may be sure, and therefore you should not try to know her. I placed you near her because she is the most knowing of all my pupils except Miss Benette, the young person who sat next you this evening."

"With the lovely voice? Oh, I should never know *her* if I wished it."

"You need not wish it, but even if you did she would never become troublesome in any respect, she is too calm, too modest."

"And pray tell me, Sir, is she to be a dancer too?"

"No, oh no! she will decidedly become one of the finest singers in England, but I believe she will not go upon the stage."

"You call the theatre the stage, Sir, don't you?"

"Yes, in this instance."

"But why won't she go upon the stage? cannot she act?"

"She does not think she is called to it by any special gift."

"Did she say those words, Sir?"

"Those very words."

"I thought she would just say them, Sir. Does she know you very well?"

"She is my own pupil?"

"Oh, out of the class, Sir, I suppose."

"Yes, I teach her in my house."

"Sir, I wish you taught me in your house."

"I should say too, that I wished it," answered Davy, sweetly, "but you have a sister to teach you at home, and Clara Benette has no one."

"I should like to have no one—to teach me I mean—if you would teach me. If my mother said yes, would you, Sir?"

"For a little while I would with pleasure."

"Why not long, Sir? I mean why only for a little while?"

"Because there are others of whom you ought to learn, and *will* learn I am persuaded,"—he added, almost dreamingly, as he turned me to the moonlight now overspread about us, and surveyed me seriously; "The little violin-face, you

know Charles, I cannot be mistaken in those lines."

"I would rather sing, Sir."

"Ah! that is because you have not tried anything else."

"But, Sir, *you* sing."

"I suppose I must say as Miss Benette does, 'I have a special gift,' that way," replied Davy, laughing.

"You have a special gift all the ways, I think, Sir," I cried as I ran into our house. I told Millicent all he had said, except that Laura was to be a dancer, and yet I cannot tell why I left this out, for there was that about her fairly repelling me, and at the same time I felt as if exposed to some power through her, and could not restrain myself from a desire to see her again. Millicent told my mother all that I had said to *her* the next morning at breakfast. My mother, who had as much worldliness as any of us, and that was just none, was mightily amused at my new interests; she could not make up her mind about the private lessons yet; she thought me too young, and that I had plenty of time before me

—at present the class was sufficient excitement and gave me enough to do. Clo quite coincided here; she, if anything, thought it rather too much already, though a very good thing indeed.

CHAPTER XIII.

NEXT time we met we began the anthem after our first exercise. Laura—by this time she was always Laura in my own world—nodded at me. She had on a green silk frock to-night; and surely no colour could have so enhanced the clarified brightness of her strange eyes. Davy was pleased with us, but not with our enunciation of certain syllables. He requested us as a favour to practise between that meeting and the next. There were a great many assents, and Laura was very open in her "yes." Miss Benette whispered to herself, "of course." And I unable to resist the opportunity, whispered to her, "Does he mean that we are to practise alone, or one by one?"

"Mr. Davy will lend us our parts and I dare say will copy them on purpose," she replied. "It will be better to practise alone, or at least one or two together, than a great many or even a few. We can more easily detect our faults."

"How well she speaks!" I thought,—"quite as, prettily as Millicent; her accent is very good I am sure,"—and I again addressed her. "I do not think you have any faults at all—your voice seems able to do anything."

"I do nothing at all with it, it seems to me, and that I have very little voice at present:—I think we had better not talk, because it seems so careless."

"Talk to me," broke in Laura from beyond Miss Benette; but I would not; I steadily looked in front full of a new plan of mine. I must explain that we proceeded slowly, because Davy's instructions were complete; perhaps too ideal for the majority, but for some and for me there was an ineffaceable conviction in every novel utterance.

Just before we separated, I ventured to make my request. "Miss Benette!" I said, and she almost stared, quite started to find I knew her

name; "Mr. Davy told me who you were—will you let me come and practise with you? He will tell you my name if you must know it, but I should so like to sing with you; I do so admire your voice." I spoke with the most perfect innocence, at the same time quite madly wishing to know her; I did not mean to be overheard, but on the instant Laura looked over.

"You don't ask *me*."

"Because I don't care about your voice," I answered bluntly. She again gazed at me brightly, her eyes swimming.

"Oh hush!" whispered Miss Benette, "you have hurt her, poor little thing."

"How very good you are!" I returned, scarcely knowing what to say—"I always speak the truth."

"Yes, I should think so; but it is not good taste to dislike Laura's voice, for it is very pretty."

"Come, Miss Benette, do make haste and tell me whether you will let me sing with you to-morrow."

"I do not mind if your friends will not object."

"Tell me where you live then."

"In St. Anthony's Lane just by the new foun-

dation. There is a tree in front, but no garden. You must not come if you please until after one o'clock, because I have to practise for my other lessons."

"Good night."

She ran off having bowed a little curtsey—Laura had left while we were talking.

"Now," thought I, "I shall have it all out, who she is, and what she does, and I will make Millicent go to see her." Davy here joined me.

"So you have made friends with Miss Benette."

"Yes, Sir;" but I did not tell him I was going to practise with her, for fear anything should prevent my going.

"She is an excellent young person, and will be a true artist. Nevertheless, remember my injunction—rather too few friends than too many."

"I mean to keep friends with her, and to make my sister friends with her."

"Your sister does not want friends, I should think."

"Oh Sir, did you ever find out who the Conductor was?"

"Nobody knows—it is very singular," and he raised his voice, "that he has never been heard of

since, and had not been seen before by anybody present, though so many foreign professors were in the hall. In London they persist it was Milans-André, though André has himself contradicted the assertion."

"I should like to hear Milans-André."

"You will some day, no doubt."

"Do you think I shall?"

"I feel in myself quite sure. Now, good night to you."

"Do come in, Sir, and have some supper, please."

But Davy was off in the moonlight, before the door could be opened into our house.

When I told Millicent I was going to practise with one of the class, she thought fit to tell my mother. My mother made various inquiries, but I satisfied her by assuring her it was one of Davy's own pupils, and his favourite; and I contrived not to be asked whether it was a young lady, I let them think just at that time it was a young gentleman about my own standing. The only direct injunction laid upon me was, that I should be home for tea at five o'clock, and as I did not leave

our house until after our one o'clock dinner, this did not give me very much time; but I ran the whole way.

I forgot to mention that Davy had lent each of us our parts beautifully copied; at least he had lent them to all who engaged to practise, and I was one. I had rolled it up very neatly.

I soon found the house, but I was certainly astonished when I did find it. I could not believe such a creature as Miss Benette could remain, so bright, buried down there. It was the last house of a very dull row, all let out in lodgings—the meanest in the town except the very poor.

It was no absurd notion of relative inferiority with which I surveyed it: I was pained at the positive fact, that the person to whom I had taken such a fancy should be obliged to remain where I felt as if I should never be able to breathe. I lingered but a moment though, and then I touched a little heavy distorted knocker that hung nearly at the bottom of the door; how unlike I thought to Lenhart Davy's tiny castle under lock and key! Presently the door was opened by a person, the like of whom I had never seen in all my small experience—a universal servant, required to be

ubiquitous; let this description suffice. I asked for Miss Benette. "The first door to the right, upstairs," was the reply; and passing along a dark entry, I began to ascend them, steep and carpetless. I seemed, however, to revive when I perceived how lately the wooden steps had been washed; there was not a foot-mark all the way up to the top, and they smelt of soap and water.

I found several doors to embarrass me on the landing, all painted black, but I heard tones in one direction that decided me to knock. A voice as soft as Millicent's responded, "Come in."

Oh how strangely I felt when I entered! to the full as strangely as when I first saw Davy's sanctum. No less a sanctum this, I remember thinking, to the eyes that behold the pure in heart. It was so exquisitely tidy. I felt at once that my selfish sensibilities had nothing to fear; the room was indeed small, and no book walls darkened gloriously the daylight; the fireplace was hideous, the carpet coarse and glaring, the paper was crude green—I hate crude greens more than yellow blues—and the chairs were rush-bottomed, every one. But she for whom I came was seated at the window singing; she held some piece of work in her hand

which she laid upon the table when I entered. Pardon my reverting to the table; I could not keep my eyes from it. It was covered with specimens of work; such work as I had never seen, as I shall never see again, though all my sisters could embroider, could stitch, could sew with the very best. She did not like me to look at it though, I thought, for she drew me to the window by shewing me a chair she had set for me close beside her own. The only luxury amidst the furniture was a mahogany music-stand, which was placed before our two seats. One part lay upon the stand, but it was not in Lenhart Davy's autography.

"Did you copy that part yourself, Miss Benette?" said I, (unable to restrain the question.)

"Yes, I thought it too much that Mr. Davy should copy all the parts himself for us."

"Does he?"

"Oh yes, did you not know it? But we must not talk, we must work. Let us be very careful."

"You show me how; please to sing it once alone."

She struck the tuning-fork upon the desk, and without the slightest hesitation, flush, or effort, she began. One would not have deemed it an incom-

plete fragment of score, it resounded in my very brain like perfect harmony, so strangely did my own ear infer the intermediate sounds.

"Oh how lovely! how exquisite it must be to feel you can do so much!" I exclaimed, as her unfaltering accent thrilled the last amen.

"I seem never to have done anything, as I told you before, it is necessary to do *so* much. Now sing it alone once all through, and I will correct you as Mr. Davy corrects me."

I complied instantly, feeling her very presence would be instruction, forgetting, or not conscious how young she was. She corrected me a great deal, though with the utmost simplicity. I was astonished at the depth of her remarks, though too ignorant to conceive that they broke as mere ripples from the soundless deeps of Genius. Then we sang together, and she wandered into the soprano part. I was transported; I was eager to retain her good opinion, and took immense pains. But it never struck me all the time that it was strange she should be alone; apparently alone I mean. I was too purely happy in her society. She sate as serenely as at the class, and criticised as severely as our master.

"It is getting late," she said at last, "and I think you had better go. Besides I must go on with my work. If you are so kind as to come and practise with me again, I must work while I sing, as I do when I am alone."

"Oh, why did you not to-day?"

"I thought it would not be polite, the first time," answered she, as gravely as a judge, and I never felt so delighted with anything in all my life. I looked up at her eyes, but the lashes were so long I could not see them, for *she* was looking down.

"Will you think me rude if I ask to look at your work?"

"You may look at what I am going to send to the shop."

"Oh, what shop?"

She got out of her chair and moved to the table. There was no smile upon her baby-mouth. She pointed to the articles I had noticed, but had not dared to examine. They were indeed sights to see, one and all. Such delicate frock-bodies and sprigged caps for infants, such toilette cushions rich with patterns like ingrained pearls, such rolls of lace with running gossamer leaves, or edges fine

as the pinked carnations in Davy's garden. There were also collars with broad white leaves and peeping buds, or wreathing embroidery like sea-weed, or blanched moss, or magnified snow, or whatever you can think of as most unlike work. Then there was a central basket, lined with white satin, in which lay six cambric handkerchiefs, with all the folded corners outwards, each corner of which shone as if dead-silvered with the exquisitely wrought crest and motto of an ancient coroneted family.

"Oh, I never did see anything like them!" was all I could get out, after peering into everything till the excelling whiteness pained my sight. "Do tell me where you send them?"

"I used to send them to Madame Varneckel's, in High Street, but she cheated me, and I send them now to the Quaker's in Albemarle Square."

"You sell them, then?"

"Yes, of course; I should not work else, I do not love it."

"They ought to give you a hundred guineas for those."

"I have a hundred guineas already."

"You have!"—I quite startled her by the start

I gave. I very nearly said, "Then why do you live up here?" but I felt in time that it would be rude.

"Oh! I must get four hundred more, and that will take me two years, or perhaps three, unless my voice comes out like a flower." Here her baby-mouth burst into a smile most radiant, a rose of light!

"Oh, Miss Benette, everything you say is like one of the German stories, a Märchen, you know."

"Oh, do you talk German? I love it, I always spoke it till I came to this city."

"What a pity you came—at least I should have been very sorry if you had not come; but I mean, I should have thought you would like Germany best."

"So I should, but I could not help coming, I was a baby when I came. Mr. Davy brought me over in his arms, and he was just as old then as I am now."

"How very odd! Mr. Davy never told me he had brought you here."

"Oh no, he would not tell you all the good things he has done."

"He has done me good, quite as much good as

he can have done to you, but I should so like to hear all about it."

"You must not stay, you *shall* go," she answered, with her grave sweetness of voice and manner, "and if you are not in time to-day, we shall never practise again. I shall be very sorry, for I like to sing with you."

I was not in time, and I got the nearest thing to a scolding from my mother, and a long reproof from Clo. She questioned me as to where I had been, and I was obliged to answer; the locality did not satisfy her, she said it was a low neighbourhood, and one in which I might catch all sorts of diseases. I persisted that it was as high and dry as we were, and possessed an advantage over us in that it had better air, being as it was, all but out in the fields. My mother was rather puzzled about the whole matter, but she declared her confidence in me, and I was contented as she ever contents me. I was very grateful to her, and assured them all how superior was Miss Benette to all the members of the class. I also supplicated Millicent to accompany me the next time I should be allowed to go, that she might see the beautiful work.

"I cannot go, my dear Charles," she returned;

"if this young lady be what you make her out to yourself, it would be taking a great liberty, and besides, she could not want me, I do not sing in the class."

But she looked very much as if she wished she did.

"I just wish you would ask Mr. Davy about her, that's all."

CHAPTER XIV.

WHEN I went to the class next time, I was very eager to catch Mr. Davy, that I might explain to him where I had been, for I did not like acting without his cognizance. However, he was already down below when I arrived. My fair companions were both in their places, but to my astonishment Miss Benette took no notice of me. Her sweet face was as grave as it was before I caught from under those long lashes the azure light upon my own for the first time. Certain that she did not mean to offend me, I got on very well though, and Davy was very much pleased with our success.

Little Laura looked very pale, her hair was out of its curl, and altogether she had an appearance

as if she had been dragged through a river, lost and forlorn, and scarcely sensible. She sang languidly, but Miss Benette's clinging tones would not suffer me to be aware of any except her's and my own.

Davy taught us something about Gregorian chants, and gave us a few to practise, besides a new but extremely simple service of his own. "He wrote that for us, I suppose," I ventured, and Clara nodded seriously, but made no assent in words. Afterwards she seemed to remember me again as her ally, for as Davy wished us his adieu in his wonted free "Good night," she spoke to me of her own accord.

"I think it was all the better that we practised."

"Oh, was it not? suppose we practise again."

"I should like it if you will come at the same time, and not stay longer. And Laura can come, too, can she not?"

I did not exactly like this idea, but I could not contradict the calm mellow voice.

"Oh, if she will practise."

"Of course she will practise, if she comes on purpose."

"I don't care about coming!" exclaimed the

child in a low fretful voice, "I know I shan't get out either."

"Yes, you shall; I will coax your papa. Look! Laura, there he is waiting for you."

The child ran off instantly, with an air of fear over all her fatigue, and I felt sure she was not treated like a child. But I said nothing about it then.

"Sir!" said I to Mr. Davy, "pray walk a little way, for I want to tell you something. My mother particularly requests that you will go to our house to sup with us this evening."

"I will accept her kindness with the greatest pleasure, as I happen to be less engaged than usual."

Davy never bent his duty to his pleasure, rather the reverse.

"I went to practise with Miss Benette the day before yesterday."

"So she told me."

"She told you herself?"

"Yes, when she came to my house for her lesson last afternoon. I was very glad to hear it, because such singing as her's will improve yours. But I should like to tell your mother how she is connected with me."

"How was it, Sir?"

"Oh, I shall make a long story for her, but enough for you that her father was very good to me when I was an orphan boy, and begged my way through Germany. He taught me all that I now teach you, and when he died, he asked me to take care of his baby and his lessons. She was only born that he might see her, and die."

"Oh, Sir, how strange! poor man, he must have been very sorry."

"He was not sorry to go, for he loved his wife, and she went first."

"Oh, that was Miss Benette's mamma?"

"Yes, her lovely mamma."

"Of course she was lovely. If you please, Sir, to tell me about her, too." But Davy reserved his tale until we were at home.

My mother fully expected him, it was evident; for upon the table, besides the plain but perfectly ordered meal we always enjoyed at about nine o'clock, stood the supernumerary illustrations—in honour of a guest—of boiled custards, puff pastry, and our choicest preserves. My mother, too, was sitting by the fire in a species of

state, having her hands void of occupation, and her pocket-handkerchief outspread. Millicent and Lydia wore their dahlia-coloured poplin frocks—quite a Sunday costume—and Clo revealed herself in purple silk; singularly adapted for evening wear, as it looked black by candlelight!

I never sate up to supper except on very select occasions; I knew this would be one without being told so, and secured the next chair to my darling friend's.

I would that I could recall in his own expressive language, his exact relation of his own history as told to us that night. It struck us that he should so earnestly acquaint us with every incident, at least it surprised us then, but his after connexion with ourselves explained it in that future.

No fiction could be more fraught with fascinating personality than his actual life. I pass over his birth in England (and in London) in a dark room over a dull book-shop, in his father's house. That father, from pure breeding and constitutional exclusiveness, had avoided all intercourse with his class, and conserved his social caste by his marriage only. I linger not upon his remembrance of his

mother, Sybilla Lenhart, herself a Jewess, with the most exquisite musical ability, nor upon her death in her only son's tenth year.

His father's pining melancholy, meantime, deepened into an abstraction of misery on her loss; the world and its claims lost their hold, and he died insolvent, when Lenhart was scarcely twelve.

Then came his relation of romantic wanderings in southern France and Germany, like a troubadour, or minnesinger, with guitar and song; of his accidental friendships and fancy fraternities, till he became choir-alto at a Lutheran church in the heart of the Eichen-Land. Then came the story of his attachment to the young sage organist of that very church, who, in a fairy-like adventure, had married a count's youngest daughter, and never dared to disclose his alliance. Of her secret existence with him in the topmost room of an old house, where she never dared to look out of the window to the street, for fear she should be discovered and carried back,—the etiquette requisite to cover such an abduction being quite alien from my comprehension, by the way!—but so Davy assured us she found it necessary to abide. Of their one beautiful infant born in the old house, and the curious saintly carving about its wooden

cradle. Of the young mother, too hastily weaned from luxurious calm to the struggling dream of poverty, or at least, uncertain thrift. Of her fading, falling into a stealthy sickness, and of the night she lay (a Sunday night), and heard the organ strains swell up and melt into the moonlight, from beneath her husband's hand. Of Lenhart Davy's presence with her alone that night, unknowing, until the music-peal was over, that her soul had passed to heaven, as it were, in that cloud of music.

But I must just observe that Davy made as light as possible of his own pure and characteristic decision developed even in boyhood. He passed over, almost without comment, the more than elder brotherly care he must have bestowed on the beautiful infant, and dwelt, as if to divert us from that point, upon the woeful cares that had pressed upon his poor friend; upon his own trouble when the young organist himself, displaced by weakness from his position, made his own end, even as Lenhart's father, an end of sorrow and of love.

Davy, indeed, merely mentioned that he had brought little Clara to England himself, and left her in London with his own mother's sister, whose house he always reckoned his asylum, if not his

home. And then he told us of his promise to Clara's father that she should be brought up musically, and that no one should educate her until she should be capacitated to choose her own masters, except Davy, to whom her father had imparted a favourite system of his own.

I remember his saying, in conclusion, to my mother, "You must think it strange, dear madam, that I brought Miss Benette away from London, and alone. I could not remain in London myself, and I have known for years that her voice in itself would become to her more than the expected heritage. My aunt taught her only to work; this was my stipulation, and she now not only supports herself by working, for she is very independent, but is in possession of a separate fund besides, which is to carry her through a course of complete instruction elsewhere,—perhaps in Italy or Germany."

I saw how much my mother felt impressed by the dignity and self-reliance that so characterised him, but I scarcely expected she would take so warm an interest in his protegée. She said she should like to see some of Miss Benette's work, and again I descanted on its beauties and varieties,

supported by my hero, who seemed to admire it almost as much as I did.

"Then I may go and practise with Miss Benette?" I said, in conclusion.

"Oh certainly, and you must ask her to come and see you some evening when Mr. Davy is kind enough to drink tea with us."

That curious little Laura, too, thought I, they would not like *her* so well I fancy, but though I do dislike her myself, I wish I could find out what they do with her.

I was going to practise the day after the next, and, methought, I will then discover.

CHAPTER XV.

I TOOK a very small pot of honey for Miss Benette; Millicent had begged it for me of Lydia, who was queen-bee of the store-closet. I ran all the way as usual, and was very glad to get in. The same freshness pervaded the staircase, but, when I reached the black door, I heard two voices instead of one. I was rather put out; "Laura is there, I shall not like singing with her, it is very tiresome." I stood still and listened; it was very lovely. How ineffable music must be to the blind! yet oh to miss that which may be embraced by sight! I knocked, and they did not hear me; again—they both ceased singing, and Laura ran to the door. Instead of being dressed in her old

clothes, she perfectly startled me by the change in her costume—a glittering change, and one from herself, for through it she appeared unearthly, and if not spiritual, something very near it. Large gauze pantaloons, drawn in at the ancles, looked like globes of air about her feet, her white silk slippers were covered with spangles; so also was her frock, and made of an illusive material like clouds, and her wide sash knotted at her side was edged with silver fringe. Her amber necklace was no more there, but on her arms she had thick silver rings, with little clinking bells attached. She wore her hair, not in those stray ringlets, but drawn into two broad plaits, unfastened by knot or ribbon, but a silver net covered all her head behind, though it met not her forehead in front, over whose wide but low expanse her immense eyes opened themselves, like lustrous moons.

"Miss Lemark!" cried I, unfeignedly, "what are you going to do in that dress?"

"Come, Master Auchester, do not trouble her, she must be ready for her papa when he calls, so I have dressed her in order that she might practise with us."

"Miss Benette," I answered, "I think it is most

extremely pretty, though very queer, and I did not mean to teaze her. I wish you would tell me why you put it on though."

"To dance in," said Laura composedly, "I am going to dance in Scheradez, or the 'Magic pumpkin.' It is so pretty! But Miss Benette is so kind to me; she lets me have tea with her the nights I dance."

"But do you live in this house, then?"

"Oh, I wish I did! Oh Clara, I wish I did live with you!" and she burst into a fit of her tears.

Miss Benette arose and came to her, laying down a piece of muslin she was embroidering, "Do not cry dear; it will spoil your pretty frock; besides, Master Auchester has come on purpose to sing, and you detain him."

Laura instantly sat on a chair before the music-stand, her diaphanous skirts stood round her like the petals of a flower, and with the tears yet undried, she began to sing, in a clear little voice as expressionless as her eyes, but as enchanting to the full, as her easy painless movements. It was very pleasurable work now, and Clara corrected us both, she all the while sustaining a pure golden soprano.

"I am tired," suddenly said Laura.

"Then go into the other room and rest a little. Do not ruffle your hair, which I have smoothed so nicely, and be sure not to lie down upon the bed, or you will make those light skirts as flat as pancakes."

"How am I to rest then?"

"In the great white chair."

"But I don't want to sit still, I only mean I am tired of singing; I want to dance my pas."

"Then go into the other room all the same—there is no carpet, it is best."

"I don't like dancing in that room, it is so small."

"It is not smaller than this one. The fact is you want to dance to Master Auchester."

"Yes, so I do."

"But he came to sing, not to see you."

"I should like to see her dance though," said I; "do let her, Miss Benette!"

"If you can stay. But do not begin the whole of that dance, Laura, only the finale, because there will not be time, and you will besides become too warm, if you dance from the beginning, for the cold air you must meet on your way to the theatre."

Miss Benette's solemn manner had great

authority over the child, it was certain; she waited until the elder had put aside the brown table, "That you may not blow my bits of work about and tread upon them," she remarked. "Shall I sing for you, Laura?"

"Oh please do! pray do! Miss Benette," I cried, "it will be so charming."

She began gravely as in the anthem, but with the same serene and genial perfection, to give the notes of a wild measure, in triple time though not a waltz.

Laura stood still and gazed upwards until the opening bars had sounded, then she sprang as it were into space, and her whole aspect altered. Her cheeks grew flushed as with a fiery impulse, her arms were stretched, as if embracing something more etherial than her own presence; a suavity that was almost langour, at the same time took possession of her motions. The figure was full of difficulty, the time rapid, the step absolutely twinkling. I was enraptured—I was lost in this kind of wonder—"How very strange that any one should call dancing wrong, when it is like that! How extraordinary that every one does not think it lovely! How mysterious that no one should talk

about her as a very great wonder! She is almost as great a wonder as Miss Benette. I should like to know whether Mr. Davy has seen her dance."

But though I called it dancing, as I supposed I must, it was totally unlike all that I had considered dancing to be. She seemed now suspended in the air, her feet flew out with the spangles like a shower of silver sparks, her arms were flung above her, and the silver bells as she floated by me without even brushing my coat, clinked with a thrilling monotone against Clara's voice. Again she whirled backwards, and letting her arms sink down, as if through water or some resisting medium, fell into an attitude that restored the undulating movement to her frame, while her feet again twinkled, and her eyes were raised, "Oh!" I exclaimed, "how lovely you look when you do that!" for the expression struck me suddenly; it was an illumination as from above, beyond the clouds, giving a totally different aspect from any other she had worn. But lost in her maze, she did not, I believe, hear me. She quickened and quickened her footsteps till they merely skimmed the carpet, and with a slide upon the very air, shook the silver bells as she once more arched her

arms, and made a deep and spreading reverence. Miss Benette looked up at me, and smiled.

"Now you must go, it is your time, and I want to give Laura her tea."

"I have brought you some honey, Miss Benette, will you eat it with your bread? It is better than bonbons, Miss Laura."

"I did not care for the bonbons, I only thought you would like them—they gave them to me at rehearsal."

"Do you go to rehearsal then, as well as the singers?"

"I go to rehearse in the ballet, and when there is no ballet, I sing in the chorus."

"But you are so little, do you always dance?"

"I am always to dance now, I did not until this season."

Her voice was dreamy and cold, the flush had already faded, she seemed not speaking with the slightest consciousness.

"Do go, Master Auchester!" and Clara looked at me from her azure eyes as kindly as if she smiled, "Do go, or she will have no tea, and will be very tired; I am so much obliged to you for the

sweet yellow honey, I shall keep it in my closet, in that pretty blue jar."

I *would* have the blue jar, though Lydia wanted me to take a white one.

"Oh pray eat the honey, and give me the jar to fill again! I won't stay, don't be afraid, but good-night. Won't you let me shake hands with you, Miss Lemark?" for she still stood apart, like a reed in a sultry day. She looked at me directly, "Good night, dear." I was so inexpressibly touched by the tone, or the manner, or the mysterious something—that haunted her dancing—in *her;* that I added, "Shall I bring you some flowers next class-night?"

"If you please."

"Oh do go, Master Auchester, I prayed you ten minutes ago."

"I am gone." And so I was, and this time I was not too late for my own tea at home.

There must be something startlingly perfect in that which returns upon the soul with a more absolute impression, after its abstraction of our faculties has passed away. So completely had the fascination of those steps sufficed, that I forgot the

voice of Miss Benette, resounding all the time, and only associated in my recollection the silver monotone of the clinking bells with the lulling undulation, the quivering feet. All night long when I dreamed it was so; and when I awoke in the morning (as usual) I thought the evening before a dream.

I dared not mention Laura to any one except Millicent, but I could not exist without some species of sympathy, and when I had finished all my tasks, I entreated her to go out with me alone. She had some purchases to make, and readily agreed; it was a great treat to me to walk with her at any time. I cannot recollect how I introduced the subject, but I managed to ask somehow, after some preamble, whether my mother thought it wrong to dance in public.

"Of course not," she replied directly, "some people are obliged to do so in order to live—they excel in that art as others excel in other arts, and it is a rare gift to possess the faculty to excel in that, as in all other arts."

"So, Millicent, she would not mind my knowing a dance-artist any more than any other artist?"

"Certainly it is the greatest privilege to know

true artists, but there are few in the whole world. How few then there must be in our little corner of it!"

"You call Mr. Davy an artist, I suppose?"

"I think he pursues art as a student, who having learned its first principles for himself is anxious to place others in possession of them, before he himself soars into its higher mysteries. So far I call him philanthropist and aspirant, but scarcely an artist yet."

"Was our Conductor an artist?"

"Oh! I should think so no doubt. Why did you ask me about artists, Charles?"

"Oh, I suppose you would not call a little girl an artist, if she were as clever as possible. There is a little girl at the class who sits very near me. She is a great favourite of Miss Benette. Such a curious child, Millicent! I could not endure her till yesterday evening. She was there when I went to practise, all ready dressed for the theatre. She looked a most lovely thing, not like a person at all, but as if she could fly; and she wore such beautiful clothes!"

Millicent was evidently very much surprised.

"She lives with Miss Benette, then, Charles?"

"Oh, no! for I asked her, and she said she wished she did. I should rather think somebody or other is unkind to her, for Miss Benette seems to pity her so much. Well, I was going to tell you, Millicent, she danced. Oh, it was beyond everything! You never saw anything so exquisite. I could hardly watch her about the room. She quite swam, and turned her eyes upwards. She looked quite different from what she was at the class."

"I should think so; I have always heard that stage dancing is very fascinating, but I have never seen it you know, and I do not think mother would like you to see her often, for she considers you too young to go to a theatre at all."

"Why should I be?"

"I don't know all her reasons, but the chief one I should suspect to be, is that it does not close until very late, and that the ballet is the last thing of all in the entertainment."

"Yes, I know the ballet. Laura does dance in the ballet, she told me so. But she danced in the daylight when I saw her, so there could be no harm in it."

"No harm! there is no harm in what is beautiful; but mother likes you to be fresh for everything you do in the daytime, and that cannot be unless you sleep early no less than well. She asked me the other day whether I did not think you looked very pale the mornings after the classes."

"Oh, what did you say?"

"I said, 'he is always pale, dear mother, but he never looks so refreshed by any sleep, as when he comes down those mornings, I think.'"

"Dear Millicent! you are so kind, I shall never forget it. Now do come and call upon Miss Benette."

"My dear Charles! I have never been introduced to her."

"How formal, to be sure! She would be so glad if we went, she would love you directly—everybody does."

"I do not wish they should, Charles. You must know very well I had better keep away. I do not belong to the class, and if she lives alone, she of course prefers not to be intruded upon by strangers."

"Of course not, generally. I am sure she ought not to live alone. She must be wanting somebody to speak to, sometimes."

"You are determined she shall have you, at all events."

"Oh, no! I am nothing to her, I know, but I can sing, so she likes me to go."

"I suppose she is quite a woman, Charles?"

"Oh yes, she is fourteen."

"My dear Charles, she cannot live alone; she is but a child, then. I thought her so much older than that."

"Oh, did not Mr. Davy say the other night?"

"I did not notice, I do not think so."

"Oh, he told me the first time I asked him about her."

Millicent laughed again, as we walked on, at the idea of her living alone. I still persisted it was a fact.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE next being *our* night, after dinner the next day, I went to my garden. It was growing latest Autumn, but still we had had no frosts; my monthly roses were in full bloom, my fuchsias flower-laden. Then I had a geranium or two, labelled with my name, in the little greenhouse. I gathered as many as I could hold in both my hands, and carried them into the parlour.

"You have some flowers there," said Clo with condescension.

"It is a pity to gather them when there are so few out," remarked Lydia, without lifting her eyes from her work.

I took no notice of them. Millicent beckoned me out of the parlour.

"I will give you some ribbon, Charles, if you will come to my room."

So she did; and she arranged my flowers so as to infuse into their autumnal aspect the glow of summer, so skilfully she grouped the crimson of the geraniums against the pale roses and purple stocks. I set forth, holding them in my hand. For the first time, I met Davy before I went in. He shook hands, and asked me to come to tea with him on the morrow.

Clara was there alone. She greeted me gravely, and yet I thought she would have smiled, had there not been something to make her grave.

"Miss Benette!" I whispered, but she would not answer.

Davy had just emerged below. We were making rapid progress. I always made way, not only because my ear was true, and my voice pure, but because I was sustained by the purest voice, and the truest ear in the class. But now the other voices grew able to support themselves, and nothing can be imagined more perfect in its way than the communion of the parts as they

exactly balanced each other; the separate voices toned down and blended into a full effect that extinguished any sensible difference between one and another.

I am very matter of fact I know, but that is better than to be commonplace, and not the same thing, though they are often confounded. If the real be the ideal, then is the matter of fact the true. This ghost of an aphorism stalked forth from my brain, whose chambers are unfraught with booklore as with worldly knowledge—and to lay its phantomship, I am compelled to commit it to paper.

I could not make Clara attend to me until all was over. Then she said to me of her own accord.

"Little Laura is ill, she caught cold after she danced the other evening, and has been in bed since."

"Will you have these flowers then? I am afraid they are half faded, though my hand is very cool."

"I will take them to Laura, she has no flowers."

"I am very sorry, I hope it was not my fault. I mean I hope it did not tire her to dance before me first."

"Oh no, it was her papa's fault for letting her come into the cold air without being well wrapped up. She had a shawl to put on, and a cloak besides of mine, but her papa gave them to somebody else."

"How dreadfully unkind! Is it her papa who did such a thing?"

"Her own father. But look Master Auchester, there is Mr. Davy beckoning to you. And I must go, my nurse is waiting for me."

"So is mine, downstairs. Have you a nursetoo?"

"I call her so, she came from Germany to find me, and now I take care of her."

I was very anxious to see how Davy would address his adopted child, who numbered half his years, and I still detained her hoping that he would join us. I was not mistaken, for Davy smiling to himself at my obstinate disregard of his salute, stepped up through the intervening forms: "So you would not come down Charles! I wanted to ask you to come early, as I wish to try your voice with Miss Benette's. Come at least by five o'clock."

He looked at Clara and I looked at her. Without a smile upon her sweet face, (but in the plenitude of that infantine gravity which so enchanted the *not*

youngest part of myself,) she bowed to him and answered, " If you please, Sir. Then I am not to come in the morning."

" Oh yes, in the morning also if you can spare time. You know why I wish to hear you sing together."

" Yes, Sir—you told me. Good night, Master Auchester, and Sir, to you."

And she ran out, having replaced her black bonnet and long veil. Davy spoke a few words of gratified commendation in reference to our universal progress, and then, as the room was nearly empty, brought me down stairs. I asked him about Laura.

" Oh ! she is not dangerously ill."

" But I suppose she may be suffering," I added, in a sharp tone, for which I had been reproved times without number, at home.

" Why as to that we must all instruct ourselves to suffer. I am very sorry for my little pupil. She has had an attack of inflammation, but is only now kept still by weakness, Miss Benette tells me."

" Miss Benette is very good to her I think."

" Miss Benette is very good to everybody," said Davy earnestly, with a strange bright meaning in

his accent. I looked up at him but it was too dark to see his expressive face, for now we were in the street.

"She is good to me but could hardly be so to you, Sir. She says you have done everything for her, and do still."

"I try to do my duty by her; but I owe to her more than I can ever repay."

How curious to be sure! I thought, but I did not say so—there was a preventive hush in his tone and manner.

"I should so like to know what we shall sing to-morrow."

"So you shall *to-morrow*, but to night I scarcely know myself. I will come in with you that I may obtain your mother's permission to run away with you again. But not to another Festival just yet; I could almost say would that it were."

"I could quite, Sir."

"But we must make a musical feast ourselves, you and I."

"Oh Sir! pray let me be a side-dish."

"That you shall be. But here we are."

Supper was spread in our parlour, and my sisters looked a perfect picture of health, comfort, and

interest—three beatitudes of domestic existence. Lydia answered to the first, Clo to the second, (she having fallen asleep in her chair by the charmingly brilliant fire,) and dear Millicent, on our entrance, to the third; for she looked half up and glowed, the fire-light played upon her brow, but there was a gleam, more like moonlight, upon her lips as she smiled to welcome us. My mother, fresh from a doze, sympathetic with Clo, extended her hand with all her friendliness to Davy, and forced him to sit down and begin upon the plate she had filled, before she would suffer him to speak. It was too tormenting, but so it was, that she thought proper to send me to bed after I had eaten a slice of bread and marmalade, before he had finished eating. I gave Millicent a look into her eyes, however, which I knew she understood, and I therefore kept awake, expecting her after Margareth had put out my candle. My fear was lest my mother, dear creature, should come up first, for I still slept in a corner of her room; but I knew Davy could not leave without my knowing it, as every sound passed into my brain from below. At last I listened for the steps for which I was always obliged to listen soft as her touch and

gentle eyes, and I felt Millicent enter all in the dark.

"Well, Charles!" she began, as she put aside my curtain and leaned against my mattrass, "it is another treat for you, though not so great a one as your first glory, and you will have to sustain your own credit rather more specially. Do you know the Priory on the Lawborough road, not a great way from Mr. Hargreave's factory?"

"Yes, I know it; what of that?"

"The Redferns live there, and the young ladies are Mr. Davy's pupils."

"Not at the class, I suppose?"

"No; but Mr. Davy gives them singing lessons, and he says they are rather clever, though perhaps not *too* really musical. They are very fond of anything new; and now they intend to give a large musical party, as they have been present at one during a stay they made in London lately. It is to be a very select party; some amateur performers are expected, and Mr. Davy is going to sing professionally Not only so, the young ladies' pianoforte master will be present, and most likely a truly great player, Charles - an artist —the violinist Santonio."

"Was he at the Festival?"

"Oh no: Mr. Davy says they have written to him to come from London. But now I must explain *your* part. Mr. Davy was requested to bring a vocal quartet from his class, as none of the guests can sing in parts. He is to take Miss Benette as a soprano, for he says her soprano is as superior as her lower voice."

"So it is."

"And some tenor or other."

"Mr. Newton, I dare say; he leads all the others."

"I think it was. And you, Charles, he wishes to take, for he says your alto voice is very beautiful. You will do your best, I know."

"I would do *anything* to hear a great violin player."

And full of the novel notion I fell asleep much sooner than I did (as a child) when no excitement was before me.

CHAPTER XVII.

My mother, besides being essentially an unworldly person, had, I think, given up the cherished idea of my becoming a great mercantile character, and even the expectation that I should take kindly to the prospective partnership with Fred; for certainly she allowed me to devote more time to my music tasks with Millicent than to any others. I owe a great deal to that sister of mine, and particularly the early acquaintance I made with intervals, scales, and chords. Already she had taught me to play from figured basses a little, to read elementary books, and to write upon a ruled slate, simple studies in harmony.

Hardly conscious who helped me on, I was

helped very far indeed. Other musicians before whom I bow, have been guided in the first toneless symbols and effects of tone, by the hand, the voice, the brain of women; but they have generally been famous women. My sister was a quiet girl. Never mind! she had a fame of her own at last. Davy, considering I was in progress, said no more about teaching me himself, and indeed it was unnecessary. I was certainly rather surprised at my mother's permission for me to accompany him to the Redferns, first and chiefly because I had never visited any house she did not frequent herself, and she had never been even introduced to this family, though we had seen them in their large pew at church, and I was rather fond of watching them—they being about our choicest gentry. For all the while I conceived I should be a visitor, and that each of us would be on the same footing.

Had I not been going to accompany Davy, I should have become nervous at the notion of attending a great party met at a fashionable house, but as it was, it did but conceal for me a glorious unknown, and I exulted while I trembled a little at my secret heart.

But I went to my master as he had requested,

and he let me into his shell. I smelt again that delicious tea, and it exhilarated me as on the first occasion. Up-stairs in the little room was Miss Benette. She was dressed as usual, but I thought she had never worn anything yet so becoming as that plain black silk frock. The beautiful china was upon the table, now placed for three, and child as I was, I could not but feel most exquisitely, the loveliness of that simplicity which rendered so charming and so convenient, the association of three ages so incongruous.

There are few girls of fourteen who are women enough to comport themselves with the inbred dignity that appertains to woman in her highest development, and there are few women who retain the perfume and essence of infancy. *These* were flung around Clara in every movement, at each smile or glance; and *those* adorned her as with regality—a regality to which one is born, not with which one has been invested. She did not make tea for Davy, nor did she interfere with his little arrangements, but she sat by me, and talked to me spontaneously, while she only spoke when he questioned, or listened while he spoke.

There was perfect serenity upon her face, yes! just the serenity of a cloudless heaven, and had I been older, I should have whispered to myself that her peace of soul was all safe, so far as he was concerned. But I did not think about it, though I might naturally have done so, for I was romantic to intensity, even as a boy.

"How is Miss Lemark?" I suddenly inquired, while Davy was in the other little room. I forgot to mention that my surmise was well founded—he *had* no servant.

"She is much better, thank you, or I should not have come here. The flowers look so very fresh to-day, and she lies where she can see them."

"When will she get up?"

"I have persuaded her to remain in bed even longer than she needs, for the moment she gets up they will make her dance, and she is not strong enough for that yet."

Davy here returned, and we began to sing. We had a delicious hour. In that small room Clara's voice was no more too powerfully perceptible, than is the sunlight in its entrance to a tiny cell—that glory which itself is the day of heaven. She sang

with the most rarified softness, and I quite realized how infinitely she was my superior in art no less than by nature.

What we chiefly worked upon were glees, single quartet pieces, and an anthem; but last of all, Davy produced two duets for soprano and alto; one from Purcell, the other from a very old opera, the hundred and something one of the Hamburgh Kaiser, which our master had himself copied from a copy.

"Shall you sing with us in all the four-parted pieces, Sir?" I ventured to ask during the symphony of this last.

"Yes, certainly, and I shall accompany you both invariably. But of all things do not be afraid, nor trouble yourselves the least about singing in company: nothing is so easy as to sing in a high room like that of the Redferns', and nothing is so difficult as to sing in a small room like this."

"I do not find it so difficult, Sir," said Clara, gravely.

"That is because, Miss Benette, you have already had your voice under perfect control for months. You have been accustomed to practise

nine hours a day without an instrument, and nothing is so self-supporting as such necessity."

"Yes, Sir, it is very good, but not so charming as to sing with your sweet piano."

"Do you really practise nine hours a day, Miss Benette?"

"Yes, Master Auchester, always; and I find it not enough."

"But do you practise without a piano?"

"Yes, it is best for me; but when I come to my lessons and hear the delightful keys, I feel as if music had come out of heaven to talk with me."

"Ah, Miss Benette!" said Davy, with a kind of exultation, "what will it be when you are singing *in* the heart of a grand orchestra!"

"I never heard one, Sir, you know; but I should think that it was like going into heaven after music and remaining there."

"But were you not at the Festival, Miss Benette?"

"Oh no."

"How very odd, when I was there!"

Davy looked suddenly at her, but though his quick bright glance might have startled away her

answer, that came as calmly as all her words, like a breeze awakening from the south.

"I did not desire to go; Mr. Davy had the kindness to propose I should, but I knew it would make me idle afterwards, and I cannot afford to waste my time. I am growing old."

"Now, Miss Benette, there is our servant or your nurse;" for I heard a knock. "Will you let me come to-morrow?"

"Just for half an hour only; because I want to sit with Laura."

"I thank you; thank you!"

"How did you get home last night?" I asked on the promised meeting. She was sitting at the window, where the light was strongest; for her delicate work was in her hand, and as the beams of a paler sun came in upon her, I thought I had seen something like her somewhere before in a picture as it were framed in a dusky corner, but itself making for its own loveliness a shrine of light. Had I travelled among studios and galleries, I must have been struck by her likeness to those rich hued but fairest ideals of the sacred schools of painting, which have consecrated the old masters as worshippers of the highest in

woman—but I had never seen anything of the kind except in cold prints. That strange reminiscence of what we never have really seen, in what we at present behold, appertains to a certain temperament only—that temperament in which the ideal notion is so definite, that all the realities the least approximating thereunto strike as its semblances, and all that it finds beautiful it compares so as to combine with the beautiful itself. I do not suppose I had this consciousness that afternoon, but I perfectly remember saying, before Clara rose to welcome me as she always did, "You look exactly like a picture."

"Do I? but no people in pictures are made at work. Oh it is very unpicturesque!" and she smiled.

"I am not going to sing, Miss Benette; there is no time in just half an hour."

"I *must* practise, Master Auchester; I cannot afford to lose my half-hours and half-hours."

"But I want to ask you some questions. Now do answer me, please."

"You shall make long questions then, and I short answers."

She began to sing her florid exercises, a paper

of which lay open upon the desk, in Davy's hand.

"Well first I want to know, why they are unkind to Laura, and what they do to her which is unkind?"

"It would not be unkind if Laura were altogether like her father, as she is in some respects, because then she would have no feeling; but she has the feeling of which her mother died."

"That is a longer answer than I expected, but not half enough; I want to know so much more. How pretty your hands are! so pink!" I remarked admiringly, as I watched the dimples in them, and the infantinely rounded fingers as they spread so softly amidst the delicate cambric.

"So are yours' very pretty hands, Master Auchester, and they are very white, too. But never mind the hands now. I should like to tell you about Laura, because if you become a great musician you will, perhaps, be able to do her a kindness."

"What sort of kindness?"

"Oh, I cannot say, my thoughts do not tell me; but any kindness is great to her. She has a clever father but he has no more heart than this needle, though he is as sharp and has as clear an eye.

He made his poor little wife dance even when she was ill; but that was before I knew Laura. When I came here from London with Mr. Davy, I knew nobody, but one evening I was singing and working, while Thoné (that is my nurse) was gone out to buy me food, when I suddenly heard a great crying in the street. I went down stairs and opened the door, and there I found a little girl, with no bonnet upon her head, who wore a gay frock all covered with artificial flowers. My nurse was there too. Thoné can't talk much English, but she said to me, 'Make her speak. I found her sitting down in the gutter, all bathed in tears.'

"Then I said, in my English, 'Do tell me why you were in the streets, pretty one, and why you wear these fine clothes in the mud.'

"'Oh, I cannot dance!' she cried and sobbed; 'my feet are stiff with standing all this morning, and if I try to begin before those lamps on that slippery floor I shall tumble down.'

"'You have run away from the theatre,' I said, and then I took her up stairs in my arms (for she was very light and small), and gave her some warm milk. Then, when she was hushed, I said,

'Were you to dance, then? It is very pretty to dance: why were you frightened?'

"'I was so tired. Oh, I wish I could go to my mamma.'

"I asked her where she was, and she began to shake her head, and to tell me her mamma was dead. But in the midst there was a great knocking at the door down stairs. Laura was dreadfully alarmed, and screamed, and while she was screaming in came a great man, his face all bedecked with paint. I could not speak to him, he would not hear me, nor could we save the child then, for he snatched her up (all on the floor as she was) and carried her down stairs in his arms. He was very big, certainly, and had a fierce look, but did not hurt her; and as I ran after him, and Thoné after me, we saw him put her into a close coach and get in after her, and then they drove away. I was very miserable that night, for I could not do anything for the poor child; but I went the first thing the next morning to the theatre that had been open the evening before. Thoné was with me, and took care of me in that wild place. At last I made out who the little dancing girl was, and where she lived, and then I went to that house.

Oh, Master Auchester! I thought my house so still, so happy after it. It was full of noise and smells, and had a look that makes me very low—a look of discomfort all about. I said I wanted the manager, and half a dozen smart dirty people would have shown me the way, but I said, 'Only one if you please.'

"Then some young man conducted me upstairs into a greasy drawing-room. Thoné did not like my staying, but I would stay, although I did not once sit down. The carpet was gay, and there were muslin curtains; but you, Master Auchester, could not have breathed there. I felt ready to cry, but that would not have helped me, so I looked at the sky out of the window till I heard some one coming in. It was the great man. He was selfish-looking and vulgar, but very polite to me, and wanted me to sit upon his sofa. 'No,' I said, 'I am come to speak about the little girl who came to my house last night, and whom I was caring for when you fetched her away. And I want to know why she was so afraid to dance, and so afraid of you?'

"The man looked ready to eat me, but Thoné (who is a sort of gipsy, Master Auchester) kept

him down with her grand looks, and he turned off into a laugh: 'I suppose I may do as I please with my own child.'

"'No Sir!' I said, 'not if you are an unnatural father, for in this good land the law will protect her; and if you do not promise to treat her well I am going to the magistrate about it. I suppose she has no mother; now I have none myself, and I never see anybody ill-treated who has no mother without trying to get them righted.'

"'You are a fine young lady to talk to me so, why you are a child yourself! Who said I was unkind to my Laura? She must get her living, and she can't do better than dance, as her mother danced before her. I will send for her, and you shall hear what she will say for herself this morning.'

"He shouted out upon the landing, and presently the child came down. I was surprised to see that she looked happy, though very tired. I said, 'Are you better to-day?'

"'It was very nice,' she answered, 'and they gave me such pretty flowers.'

"Then we talked a long time. I shall tire you, Master Auchester, if I tell you all; but I found

myself not knowing what to do, for though the child had been made to go through a great deal of suffering—almost all dancers must,—yet she did so love the art, that it was useless to try and coax her out of her services for it. All I could do, then, was to entreat her papa not to be severe with her, if even he was obliged to be strict; and then, for he had told me she danced the night before the first time in public, I added to herself, 'You must try to deserve the flowers they give you, and dance your very best. And if you practise well when you are learning in the mornings, it will become so easy that you will not find it any pain at all, and very little fatigue.'

"Her papa, I could see, was not ill-humoured, but very selfish, and would make the most of his clever little daughter, so I would not stay any longer, lest he should forget what I had said. He was rather more polite again before I went away, and in a day or two I sent Thoné with a note to Laura, in which I asked her to tea,—and, for a wonder, she came. I am tiring you, Master Auchester."

"Oh, do please, for pity's sake, go on, Miss Benette!"

"Well, when she came with Thoné, she was dressed much as she dresses at the class, and I have not been able yet to persuade her to leave off that ugly necklace. She talked to me a great deal. She was not made to suffer until after her mother's death, for her mother was so tender of her, that she would allow no one to touch her but herself. She taught her to dance, though; and little Laura told me so innocently how she used to practise by the side of her mother's sick bed,—for she lay ill for many months. She had caught a cold, as Laura did the other night, after a great dance in which she grew very warm, and at last she died of consumption. She had brought her husband a good deal of money, and he determined to make the most of it as soon as she was dead, for he brought Laura on very fast, by teaching her all day, and torturing her too, though I really believe he thought it was necessary."

"Miss Benette!"

"Yes, for such persons as he have not sensations fine enough to let them understand how some can be made to suffer delicately."

"Oh, go on!"

"Well, she was just ready to be brought out in

a kind of fairy ballet in which children are required, the night the theatre opened this season."

"And it was then she ran away?"

"Yes; when she got into the theatre, she took fright."

"Did she dance that night, after all?"

"Oh, yes! and she liked it very much, for she is very excitable, and very fond of praise. Besides, she has a very bright soul, and she was pleased with the sparkling scenery. As she described it, 'it was all roses, and crystal, and beautiful music going round and round.' She is a sweet little child, when you really know her, and as innocent as the two little daughters of the clergyman at St. Anthony's, who go every day past hand in hand, with their white foreheads and blue eyes, and whose mamma sleeps by Laura's, in the same churchyard. Well she came to me several times, and at last I persuaded her papa to let her drink tea with me, and it saves him trouble, so he is very glad she should. It is the end of the season now, so I hope he will give her a real holiday, and she will get quite strong."

"He fetches her then, to go to the theatre?"

"Yes, it is not any trouble to him, for he calls

on another person in this lane, and they all go together."

"Do you know that person?"

"Oh, no! and Laura does not like her. But as Laura is obliged to see a good deal of low people, I like her sometimes to see high people, that her higher nature may not want food."

"I understand. Was that the reason she joined the class?"

"I persuaded her papa to allow her, by assuring him it would improve her voice for singing in the chorus; and now he comes himself, though I rather suspect it is because he likes to know all that is going on in the town."

"She goes home with him, then?"

"Yes. The reason you saw Laura in her dancing-dress was, that you might like her. I bade her bring it, and put it on her myself. I did not tell her why, but I wished you to see her too."

"But why did you wish me to like her, Miss Benette?"

"As I told you before that you may be kind to her, and also that she might see some one very gentle I wished her to be here with you."

"Am I gentle, do you consider?"

"I think you are a young gentleman," she answered, with her sweet gravity.

"But I do not see how it could do her good exactly to see gentle persons."

"Do not you? I do; I believe she will never become ungentle by living with ungentle persons, as she does and must, if she once knows what gentle persons are. I may be all wrong, but this is what I believe, and when Laura grows up, I shall find out whether I am right. Oh! it is good to love the beautiful, and if we once really love it, we can surely not do harm."

"Miss Benette!" I exclaimed suddenly, I really could not help it, "I think you are an angel."

She raised her blue eyes from the shadowy length of their lashes, and fixed them upon the dim grey autumn heaven—then without a smile, but her bright face shining even with the light of which smiles are born, she replied in the words of Mignon, but with how apart a significance! "I wish I were one!" then going on, "because then I should be all beautiful without and within me. But yet no! I would not be an angel, for I could not then sing in our class!"

I laughed out, with the most perfect sympathy in

her sentiment, and then she laughed and looked at me, exactly as an infant does in mirthful play.

"Now Miss Benette, one more question. Mr. Davy told me the other night, that you had done him good. What did he mean?"

"I do not think I can tell you what I believe he meant, because you might mention it to him, and if he did not mean that, he would think me silly, and I would not seem silly to him."

"Now do pray tell me! Do you suppose I can go home unless you will? You have made me so dreadfully curious. I should not think of telling him you had told me; now what did you do for him that made him say so?"

She replied, with an innocence the sister of which I have never seen through all my dreams of woman:—

"Mr. Davy was so condescending as to ask me one day whether I would be his wife, some time when I am grown up. And I said, no;—I think that was the good I did him."

I shall never forget the peculiar startled sensation that struck through me. I had never entertained such a notion, or any notion of the kind

about anybody, and about her it was indeed new, and to me almost an awe.

"The good you did him, Miss Benette!" I cried in such a scared tone, that she dropped her work into her lap; "I should have thought it would have done him more good if you had said yes."

"You are very kind to think so," she replied, in a tone like a confiding child's to a superior in age—far from like an elder's to one so young as myself, "but I know better, Master Auchester. It was the only thing I could do to show my gratitude."

"Were you sorry to say no, Miss Benette?"

"No, very glad and very pleased."

"But it is rather odd. I should have thought you would have liked to say yes. You do not love him then?"

"Oh yes I do, well. But I do not wish to belong to him, nor to any one, only to Music now; and besides, I should not have had his love. He wished to marry me that he might take care of me. But when he said so, I answered, 'Sir, I can take care of myself.'"

"But, Miss Benette, how much should one love,

and how, then—if one is to marry? For I do not think all people marry for love."

"You are not old enough to understand, and I am not old enough to tell you," she said sweetly, with her eyes upon her work as usual, "nor do I wish to know. If some people marry not for love, what is that to me? I am not even sorry for them, not so sorry as I am for those who know not Music, and whom Music does not know."

"Oh, they are worse off!" I involuntarily exclaimed. "Do you think I am 'known of Music,' Miss Benette?"

"I dare say, for you love it, and will serve it. I cannot tell further, I am not wise. Would you like to have your fortune told?"

"Miss Benette! what do you mean? You cannot tell fortunes."

"But Thoné can, she is a gipsy, a real gipsy, Master Auchester, though she was naughty and married out of her tribe."

"What tribe?"

"Hush!" said Clara whisperingly, "she is in my other room at work, and she would be wrath if she thought I was talking about her."

"But you said she cannot speak English."

"Yes, but she always has a feeling when I am speaking about her. Such people have—their sympathies are so strong."

Now it happened we had often talked over gipsies and their pretensions in our house, and various had been the utterances of our circle. Lydia doomed them all as impostors; my mother who had but an ideal notion of them, considered, as many do, that they somehow pertained to Israel. Clo presumed they were Egyptian, because of their contour, and their skill in pottery, though by the way, she had never read upon the subject, as she always averred. But Millicent was sufficient for me at once, when she had said one day, "At least they are a distinct race, and possess in an eminent degree the faculty of enforcing faith in the supernatural by the exercise of physical and spiritual gifts that only act upon the marvellous."

I always understood Millicent whatever she said, and I had often talked with her about them. I rather suspect she believed them in her heart to be Chaldean. I must confess, notwithstanding, that I was rather nervous when Miss Benette announced

with such childlike assurance, her intuitive credence in their especial ability to discern and decipher destiny.

I said, "Do you think she can then?"

"Perhaps it is vulgar to say 'tell fortunes,' but what I mean is that she could tell, by casting her eyes over you, and looking into your eyes, and examining your brow, what kind of life you are most fit for, and what you would make out of it."

"Oh, how I should like her to tell me!"

"She shall then, if she may come in. But your half hour has passed."

"Oh, do just let me stay a little!"

"You shall of course if you please, Sir, only do not feel obliged."

She arose and walked out of the room, closing the door. I could catch her tones through the wall; and she returned in less than a minute. There was something startling, almost to appal, in the countenance of the companion she ushered, coming close behind her. I can say that that countenance was all eye—a vivid and burning intelligence concentred in orbs whose darkness was really light, flashing from thence over every feature. Thoné was neither a gaunt nor a great

woman though tall, her hands were beautifully small and slender, and though she was as brunette as her eye was dark, she was clear as that darkness was itself light. The white cap she wore contrasted strangely with that rich hue, like sun-gilt bronze. She was old, but modelled like a statue, and her lips were keen, severe, and something scornful. It was amazing to me to see how easily Miss Benette looked and worked before this prodigy; I was speechless. Thoné took my hand in her's, and feeling I trembled, she said some quick words to Clara in a species of low German whose accent I could not understand; and Clara replied in the same. I would have withdrawn my hand, for I was beginning to fear something dreadful in the way of an oracle, but Thoné led me with irrepressible authority to the window. Once there, she fastened upon me an almost feeding glance, and having scanned me awhile, drew out all my fingers one by one with a pressure that cracked every sinew of my hand and arm. At last she looked into my palm; but made no muttering, and did not appear trying to make out anything but the streaks and texture of the skin. It could not have been ten minutes that had passed, when she let fall my

hand, and addressing Clara in a curt still manner, without smile or comment, uttered in a voice whose echoes haunt me still—for the words were rare as music,

"Tonkunst und Arzenei."

I knew enough of German to interpret these at all events, and as I stood they passed into my being by conviction, they being indeed truth.

Clara approached me. "Are you satisfied? Music *is* medicine, though I think, do not you?"

She smiled with sweet mischief.

"Oh Miss Benette, thank you a thousand times! for whether it is to be true or not, I think it is a very good fortune to be told. Has she told you your's?"

"Yes often, at least as much as she told you about yourself, she has revealed to me."

"Can she tell all people their fortunes?"

"I will ask her."

She turned to our bright Fate and spoke. On receiving a short low reply as Thoné left the room, she again addressed me; "She says," I cannot prophesy for the pure English, if there be any, because the letters of their characters are not dis-

tinct. All I know in all, is how much there is of ours' in each.

"I don't know what she means."

"No more do I."

"Oh Miss Benette! you do." For her arch smile fluttered over her lips.

"So I do; but Master Auchester, it is getting very late—you must go unless I may give you some tea. And your mother would like you to be home. Therefore go now."

I wanted to shake hands with her, but she made no show of willingness, so I did not dare, and instantly I departed. What a wonderful spell it was that bound me to the dull lane at the end of the town! certainly it is out of English life in England one must go, for the mysteries and realities of existence.—I was just in time for our tea; as I walked into the parlour the fire shone, and so did the kettle singing to itself; for in our English life we eschewed urns. Clo was reading, Lydia at the board, Millicent was cutting great slices of home-made bread. I thought to myself, "how differently we all manage here. If Millicent did but dare, I know she would behave and talk like Miss Benette."

"How is the young lady this afternoon Charles? I wish you to ask her to come and drink tea with us on Sunday after service."

"Yes mother, is Mr. Davy coming?"

"He promised the other night."

"And Charles," added Clo, "do not forget that you must go with me to-morrow and be measured for a jacket."

"I am to wear one at last then?"

"Yes, for now you are really growing too tall for frocks."

I was very glad, for I abjured those braided garments, compassing about my very heels with bondage,—with utter satisfaction. Still I was amused. "I suppose it is for this party I am going to," thought I.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE next day at class Laura's place still being empty, I watched eagerly for Clara. The people were pouring in at the door, and I knowing their faces, could not but feel how unlike she was to them all, when in the way she appeared, so bright in her dark dress, with her cloudless forehead and air of ecstatic innocence. She spoke to me to-day.

"How are you?"

"Quite well; and you, Miss Benette? But I want you to listen to me presently; seriously, I have something to say."

"I'll wait,"—and she took her seat.

Davy extolled our anthem and did not stop us once, which fact was unprecedented. We all ap-

plauded *him* when he praised *us*, at which he laughed, but was evidently much pleased. In fact he had already made for himself a name and fame in the town, and the antagonistic jealousy of the resident professors could not cope therewith, without being worsted; they had given him up, and now let him alone—thus his sensitive nature was less attacked and his energy had livelier play. When the class divided, Miss Benette looked round at me, "I am at your service, Master Auchester."

I gave her my mother's message. She was sweet and calm as ever, but still grave, and she said, "I am very grateful to your mother and to those young ladies your sisters, but I never do go anywhere out to tea."

"But Miss Benette, you are going to that party at the Redferns'."

"I am going to sing there, that is different. It is very hard to me not to come, but I must not, because I have laid it upon myself to do nothing but study until I come out. Because you see if I make friends now, I might lose them then, for they might not like to know me."

"Miss Benette!"—I stamped my foot—"How

dare you say so! We should always be proud to know you."

"I cannot tell that," she retorted; "it might be, or it might not. Perhaps you will think I am right one day. I should like to have come," she persisted bewitchingly; but I was inwardly hurt, and I dare say she thought me outwardly sulky, for it was all I could do to wish her good evening like a "young gentleman," as she had called me.

I said to Millicent when we were walking the next morning, that I had had my fortune told. We had a long conversation. I saw she was very anxious to disabuse me of the belief, that I must necessarily be what, in myself, I had always held myself ready to become, and I laughed her quite to scorn.

"But Charles," she remonstrated, "if this is to be, you must be educated with a direct view to those purposes."

"So I shall be; but when she said medicine she did not mean I should be an apothecary, Millicent;" and I laughed the more.

"No, I rather think it is music you ought to

profess. But in that case you will require high, as well as profound instruction."

"I mean to profess an instrument, and I mean to go to Germany and learn all about it."

"My dear boy!"

"Yes I do, and I know I shall, but as I have not chosen my instrument yet, I shall wait."

Millicent herself laughed heartily at this. "Would you like to learn the horn, Charles? or the flute; or perhaps that new instrument, the ophicleide?" And so the subject dwindled into a joke for that while. I then told her in strict confidence about Laura. I scarcely ever saw her so much excited to interest; she evidently almost thought Clara herself angelic, and to my delight she at length promised to call with me upon her, if I would ascertain that it would be convenient. I shall never forget, too, that Millicent begged for me from my mother some baked apples, some delicate spiced jelly, and some of her privately concocted lozenges—for Laura. I do think my mother would have liked to dispense these last *à la largesse* among the populace. I carried these treasures in a small basket to Miss Benette, and saw her just long enough

to receive her assurance that she should be so pleased if my sister would come and look at her work.

Sweet child! as indeed she was by the right of Genius—(who, if Eros be immortal youth, hath alone immortal infancy)—she had laid every piece of her beauteous work, every scrap of net or cambric down to that very last handkerchief, upon the table, which she had covered with a crimson shawl, doubtless some relic of her luxurious mother conserved for her. And with the instinct of that ideal she certainly created in her life, she had interspersed the lovely manufactures with little bunches of wild flowers and green, and a few berries of the wild rose tree, ripe and red.

I was enchanted; I was proud beyond measure to introduce to her my sister; proud of them both. Millicent was astonished—amazed—I could see she was quite puzzled with pleasure, but more than all she seemed lost in watching Clara's calm, cloudless face.

"Which of the pieces do you like best?" asked Miss Benette at last, after we had fully examined all.

"Oh, it is really impossible to say; but if I

could prefer I should confess, perhaps, that this is the most exquisitely imagined," and Millicent pointed to a veil of thin white net, with the border worked in the most delicate shades of green floss silk, a perfect wreath of myrtle leaves; and the white flowers seemed to tremble amidst that shadowy garland. I never saw anything to approach them, they were far more natural than any paintings.

Miss Benette took this veil up in her litttle pink hands, and folding it very small and wrapping it in silver paper, presented it to Millicent, saying in a child-like but most touching manner, "You must take it, then, that you may not think I am ungrateful; and I am so glad you chose that."

As Millicent said, it would have been impossible to have refused her anything. I quite longed to cry, and the tears stood in my tender-hearted sister's eyes; but Clara seemed entirely unconscious she had done anything touching, or pretty, or complete.

If I go on in this way, raking the embers of reminiscence into rosy flames, I shall never emancipate myself into the second great phase of my

existence. It is positively necessary that I should not revert to that veil at present, or I should have to delineate astonishment and admiration that had no end.

CHAPTER XIX.

AT last the day came, and, having excited myself the whole morning about the Redferns, I left off thinking of them, and returned to myself. Although it portends little, I may transmit to posterity the fact, that my new clothes came home at half-past three, and that my mother beheld me arrayed in them at five. Davy had all our parts, and the songs of Miss Benette, for she was to sing alone if requested to do so, and was to be ready when I should call, to accompany me.

I was at length pronounced at liberty to depart, that is, everybody had examined me from head to foot. I had a sprig of the largest myrtle in the greenhouse quilted into the second and third

button-holes, and my white gloves were placed in my pocket by Clo, after she had wrapped them in white paper. I privately carried a sprig of myrtle, too, for Miss Benette; it was covered with blossom, and of a very fine species. Thoné never answered the door in St. Anthony's lane, but invariably the same extraordinary figure who had startled me on my first visit. She stared so long with the door in her hand, this time, that I rushed past her, and ran up the stairs.

Still singing! Yes, there she was, in her little bonnet, but, from head to foot, enveloped in a monstrous cloak; I could not see what dress she wore. It was November now, and getting very dusk, but we had both expressed a wish to walk, and Davy always preferred it. How curious his shell looked in the uncertain gleam! the tiny garden, as immaculate as ever, wore the paler shine of asters and Michaelmas-daisies; and the casement above, being open, revealed Davy watching for us through the twilight. He came down instantly, sweeping the flower-shrubs with his little cloak, and, having locked the door, and put the key into his pocket, he accosted us joyously, shaking hands with us both. But he held all the

music under his cloak too, nor would I proceed until he suffered me to carry it. We called for Mr. Newton, our companion tenor, who lived a short way in the town. He met us with white gloves ready put on, and in the bravery of a white waistcoat, which he exhibited through the opening of his jauntily hung great coat. I left him behind with Davy, and again found myself with Miss Benette. I began to grow nervous, when, having passed the shops and factories of that district, we emerged upon the Lawborough Road, lit by a lamp placed here and there, with dark night looming in the distant highway. Again we passed house after house standing back in masses of black evergreen, but about not a few there was silence and no light from within. At length, forewarned by rolling wheels that had left us far behind them, we entered the gate of the Priory, and walked up to the door.

It was a very large house, and one of the carriages had just driven off as Davy announced his name. One of three footmen, lolling in the portico, aroused and led us to a room at the side of the hall, shutting us in. It was a handsome room, though small, furnished with a looking-glass; here

were also various coats and hats reposing upon chairs. I looked at myself in the glass while Davy and our tenor gave themselves the last touch, and then left it clear for them. I perceived that Miss Benette had not come in with us, or had stayed behind. She had taken off her bonnet elsewhere, and when we were all ready, and the door was opened, I saw her once more, standing underneath the lamp. I could now find out how she was dressed; her frock was as usual black silk, but of the very richest. She wore long sleeves, and drooping falls upon her wrists of the finest black lace; no white against her delicate throat, except that in front she had placed a small but really magnificent row of pearls. Her silky dark hair she wore as usual slightly drooped on either temple, but neither curled nor banded. I presented her with the myrtle sprig which she twisted into her pearls, seeming pleased with it; but otherwise she was very unexcited, though very bright. I was not bright but very much excited; I quite shook as we walked up the soft stair carpet side by side. She looked at me in evident surprise.

"You need not be nervous, Master Auchester, I assure you!"

"It is going into the drawing-room, and being introduced I hate; will there be many people do you think?"

She opened her blue eyes very wide when I asked her, and then, with a smile quite new to me upon her face, a most enchanting but sorely contemptuous smile, she said,

"Oh, we are not going in there—did you think so? There is a separate room for us, in which we are to sip our coffee."

I was truly astonished, but I had not time to frame any expression—we were ushered forward into the room she had suggested. It was a sort of inner drawing-room apparently, for there were closed folding-doors in the wall that opposed the entrance. An elegant chandelier hung over a central rosewood table; on this table lay abundance of music, evidently sorted with some care. Two tall wax-candles upon the mantel-shelf were reflected in a tall mirror, in tall silver sticks; the gold-coloured walls were pictureless, and crimson damask was draperied and festooned at the shuttered window. Crimson silk chairs stood about, and so did the people in the room, whom we began, Clara and I, to scrutinize. Standing at the table

by Davy, and pointing with a white kid finger to the music thereon arranged, was an individual with the organs of melody and of benevolence in about equal development; he was talking very fast. I was sure I knew his face; and so I did. It was the very Mr. Westley who came upon us in the corridor at the Festival. He taught the younger Miss Redferns, of whom there was a swarm; and as they grew they were passed up to the tuition of Monsieur Mirandos, a haughtily-behaved being, in the middle of the rug, warming his hands gloves and all, and gazing with the self-consciousness of pianist primo, then and there present. It was Clara who initiated me into this fact, and also that he taught the competent elders of that exclusively feminine flock, and that he was the author of a grand fantasia which had neither predecessor nor descendant. Miss Benette and I had taken two chairs in the corner next the crimson curtain, and nestling in there we laughed and we talked.

"Who is the man in a blue coat with bright buttons now looking up at the chandelier?" I enquired.

"That is a man who has given his name an Italian termination, but I forget it. He has a

great name for getting up concerts, and I dare say will be a sort of director to night."

So it was, at least so it seemed, for he at last left the room, and returning presented us each with a sheet of pink-satin note-paper, on which were named and written in order the compositions awaiting interpretation. We looked eagerly to see where our first glee came.

"Oh, not for a good while, Master Auchester; but do look! here is that Mirandos going to play his 'grande Fantasie sur des Motifs Militaires;' Oh! who is that coming in?"

Here Miss Benette interrupted herself, and I, excited by her accent, looked up simultaneously.

As for me I knew directly who it was, for the gentleman entering at the door so carelessly, at the same time appearing to take in the whole room with his glance, had a violin-case in his hand. I shall not forget his manner of being immediately at home, nodding to one and another amiably, but with a slight sneer upon his lip which he probably could not help, as his mouth was very finely cut. I felt certain it was Santonio, and while the gentleman upon the rug addressed him

very excitedly, and received a cool reply, though I could not hear what it was for all the men were talking, Davy came up to us and confirmed my presentiment.

"What a handsome gentleman he is! but how he stares!" said Clara, in a serious manner that set me laughing, and then Davy whispered "hush!"

But it was of little use, for Santonio came up now to our corner, and deposited his case on the next chair to Miss Benette, looking at her all the while and at me, so that we could well see his face. It was certainly very handsome, a trifle too handsome perhaps, yet full of harmonious lines, and the features were very pure. His complexion was glowing, yet fair, and passed well by contrast into the hue of his eyes, which were of that musical grey more blue than slate-coloured. Had he been less handsome, the Hebrew contour might have been more easily detected, as it was it was clear to me, but might not have occurred to others who did not look for it. A brilliant person, such as I have seldom seen, he yet interested more by his gestures, his way of scanning, and smiling to himself, his defiant self-composure, something discomposing to those about him, than by his positive personal

attractions. Having examined us, he examined also Davy, and said specially, "How are you?"

"Quite well thank you," replied our master, "I had no right to expect you would remember me, Mr. Santonio."

"Oh, I never forget anybody," was the reply, "I often wish I did, for I have seen everybody now, and there is no one else to see."

"Oh!" thought I to myself, but I said nothing, "you have not seen *one*." For I felt sure, I knew not why, that he had not.

"Is this your son, Davy?" questioned he, once more speaking, and looking down upon me for an instant.

"Certainly not, my pupil and favourite alto."

"Is he for the profession then?"

"What do you say, Charles?"

"Yes, Mr. Davy, certainly."

"If I don't mistake, it will not be alto long though," said Santonio, with lightness, "his arm and hand are ready made for me."

I was so transported that I believe I should have knelt before Santonio, but that as lightly as he had spoken, he had turned again away. It was as if he had not said those words, so unaltered

was his face with those curved eyebrows; and I wished he had left me alone altogether, I felt so insignificant. It was a good thing for me that now there entered footmen very stately, with silver trays, upon which they carried coffee, very strong and cold, and chilly green tea. We helped ourselves every one, and then it was I really began to enjoy the exclusion with which we had been visited; for we all seemed shut in and belonged to each other. The pianist primo joked with Santonio, and Mr. Westley attacked Davy; while Newton and the man in the blue coat with bright buttons wore the subject of the Festival to a thread; for the former had been away, and the latter had been there, and the latter enlightened the former, and more than enlightened him, and where his memory failed invented; never knowing that I, who had been present, was listening and judging: as Clara said "he was making up stories" —and indeed it was a surprise for me to discover such an imagination dwelling in a frame so adipose.

Santonio at last attracted our whole attention by pouring his coffee into the fire, and asking a footman who had re-entered with wafers and tea-cakes, for some more coffee that was hot; and

while we were all laughing very loud, another footman a shade more pompous than this, threw back the folding-doors that divided us from the impenetrable saloon. As those doors stood open we peeped in.

"How many people there are!" said I.

"Yes," said Clara, "but they are not very wise."

"Why do you suppose not?"

"First, because they have set the piano close up against the wall. Mr. Davy will have it out I know."

"I see a great many young ladies in pink frocks, I suppose the Miss Redferns."

"See that man, Master Auchester, who is looking down at the legs of the piano to find out how they are put on."

And thus we talked and laughed until Santonio had finished his coffee, quite as if no one was either in that room or in the next.

"It was not warm after all," said he to Mirandos, but this was in a lower tone, and he had put on an air of hauteur withal, that became him wonderfully. Then I found that we had all become very quiet, and there had grown a hush through the next

room, so that it looked like a vast picture of chandeliers all light, tall glasses, ruddy curtains, and people gaily yet lightly dressed. The men in there spoiled the picture though—they none of them looked comfortable—men seldom do in England at an evening party. Our set indeed looked comfortable enough, though Davy was a little pale, I very well knew why. At last in came the footman again, he spoke to the gentleman in the blue coat with bright buttons. *He* bowed, looked red, and walked up to Davy. Miss Benette's song came first I knew, and I declare the blood quite burned at my heart with feeling for her. How little I knew her really! Almost before I could look for her, she was gone from my side; I watched her into the next room. She walked across it just as she was used to cross her own little lonely room at home, except that she just touched Davy's arm. As she had predicted he drew the piano several feet from the wall—it was a grand piano;—and she took her place by him. As serenely, as seriously, with that bright light upon her face which was as the sunshine amidst those lamps, she seemed and I believe was, as serene, as serious, as when at home over her exquisite broidery. No music was before Davy as he commenced

the opening symphony of one of Weber's most delighting airs. The public was just fresh from the pathos of Weber's early death, and everybody rushed to hear his music. She began with an intensity that astonished even me—an ease that so completely instilled the meaning, that I ceased to be alarmed or to tremble for her. Her voice even then held promise of what it has since become, as perfectly as does the rose-bud half open, contain the rose. I have seen singers smile while they sang, I have watched them sing with the tears upon their cheeks, yet I never saw any one sing so seriously as Miss Benette; calmly because it is her nature, and above all with an evident facility so peculiar, that I have ceased to reverence conquered difficulties so much as I believe I ought to do for the sake of art. Everybody was very quiet, quieter than at many public concerts; but this audience was half stupified with curiosity as well as replete with the novelty of the style itself. Everybody who has enthusiasm knows the effect of candle-light upon the brain during the performance of music anywhere, and just as we were situated there was a strange romance I thought. Santonio stood upon

the rug, a very sweet expression sat upon his lips; I thought even *he* was enchanted; and when Clara was silent and had come back again, so quietly without any flush upon her face, I thought he would surely come too and compliment her. But no, he was to play himself, and had taken out his violin.

It was a little violin, and he lifted it as if it had been a flower or an infant, and laid his head lovingly upon it while he touched the strings. They, even those pizzicato hints, seemed to me to be sounds borne out of another sphere, so painfully susceptible I became instantly to the power of the instrument itself.

"It is to be the Grand Sonata, I see."

"No—Sir," said Davy, who had come back with Miss Benette.

"Yes; but I shall not play with Mirandos; we settled that—Miss Lawrence and I."

"Who is Miss Lawrence?"

"An ally of mine."

"In the other room?"

"Yes, yes; don't talk, Davy! she is coming after me. Your servant, Miss Lawrence!"—

I beheld a young lady in the doorway.

"So, Mr. Santonio, you are not ready? They are all very impatient for a sight of you."

"I am entirely at your service."

"Come then!"

She beckoned with her hand. It was all so sudden that I could only determine the colour of her hair—black, and of her brocaded dress—a dark blue. Her voice was in tone satirical, and she spoke like one accustomed to be obeyed. When Santonio entered there began a buzzing, and various worthies in white kid gloves clustered round the piano. He drew the desk this side of the instrument, so that not only his back was turned to us, but he screened Miss Lawrence also; and I was provoked that I could see nothing but the pearls that were twisted with her braided hair. It was one of Beethoven's complete works to be interpreted, a divine duo for violin and piano, that had then never been heard in England, except at the Philharmonic Concerts, and I did not know the name even then of the Philharmonic. And when it began an indescribable sensation of awe, of bliss, of almost anguish pervaded me; it was the very

bitter of enjoyment, but I could not realize for a long time.

The perfection of Santonio's bowing never tempted him to eccentricity, and no one could have dreamed of comparing him with Paganini, so his fame was safe. But I knew nothing of Paganini, and merely felt from head to foot as if I were the violin and he was playing upon me, so completely was I drawn into the performance, body and soul. Not the performance merely, let me say; as a violinist now, my conviction is that the influence is as much physical as supernatural of my adopted instrument. That time my nerves were so much affected that I trembled in every part of me. Internally I was weeping, but my tears overflowed not my eyes.

Santonio's cantabile, whatever they say of Ernst or of Sivori, is superior to either. There is a manly passion in his playing that never condescends to coquette with the submissive strings; it wailed enough that night for anything, and yet never degenerated into imitation. I knew directly I heard him draw the first quickening shivering chord—shivering to my heart—I knew

that the violin must become my master, or I its own.

Davy, still pale, but radiant with sympathetic pleasure, continued to glance down upon me, and Clara's eyes were lost in drooping to the ground. I scarcely know how it was, but I was very inadvertent of the pianoforte part, magnificently sustained as it was and inseparable from the other, until Clara whispered to Davy—"Does she not play remarkably well, sir?"

"Yes," he returned; "I am surprised. She surely must be professional." But none of us liked to inquire, at least then.

I noticed afterwards, from time to time, how well the piano met the violin in divided passages, and how exactly they went together; but still those strings, that bow, were all in all for me; and Santonio was the scarcely perceptible presence of an intimate sympathy, veiled from me, as it were, by a hovering mist of sound. So it was especially in the slow movement, with its long sighs, like the voice of silence, and its short broken sobs of joy. The thrill of my brain, the deep tumult of my bosom, alone prevented me from tears, just as the rain falls not when the wind is swelling highest,

but waits for the subsiding hush. The analogy will not serve me out, nevertheless, for at the close of the last movement, so breathless and so impetuous as it was, there was no hush, only a great din, in the midst of which I wept not, it was neither time nor place. Miss Benette too, whispered just at the conclusion, when Santonio was haughtily, and Miss Lawrence carelessly, retiring — "Now we shall go, but please do not make me laugh, Master Auchester."

"How can you say so, when it was your fault that we laughed the other night?"

And truly it did seem impossible to unsettle that sweet gravity of hers, though it often unsettled mine.

CHAPTER XX.

WE went, and really I found it not so dreadful, and so was I drawn to listen for her voice—so dear to me even then, that I forgot all other circumstances except that she was standing by me there singing. I sang very well, to my shame if it be spoken, I always know when I do, and the light colour so seldom seen on Davy's cheek attested his satisfaction. Davy himself sang alone next, and we were cleared off every one, while he sang so beautiful a bass solo, in its delicacy and simplicity, as I had never heard. Clara and I mutually agreed to be very nervous for our master. I am sure he was so, but nobody could have told it of him who did not know him inside and out. Not

even Santonio, who, standing on the rug again, and turning down his wristbands which had disappeared altogether while he played, said to Mirandos, "He seems very comfortable," meaning Davy. Then came a quartet, and we figured again.

I was not glad to feel the intermitting tenor supplant that soprano. Truly it seemed that the higher Clara sang the nearer she got to heaven. The company applauded this quartet, mere thready tissue of sweet sounds as it was—Rossini's —more than even Santonio's violin; but twenty years ago there had been no universal deluge of education, as I have lived to see since, and, at least in England, in the midland counties, people were few who could make out the signs of musical genius, so as to read them as they ran. Perhaps it was better that the musician then only sought for sympathy among his own kind.

I knew Mirandos and his Fantasia came next, and hastily retreated, pulling Miss Benette by her dress to bring her away too; for I had a horror of his spreading hands. Santonio, impelled I dare say by the small curiosity which characterises great minds in the majority of instances, came on

the contrary forwards, and stood in the doorway to watch Mirandos take his seat. I could see the sneer settle upon his lip, subtile as that was, and I should have liked to stand and watch him; for I am fond of watching the countenances of artists in their medium moments, when I saw that Miss Benette had stolen to the fire, and was leaning against the mantel-shelf her infantine forehead. Her attraction was strongest; I joined her.

"Now," said I, "if it were not for Santonio, would you not find this evening very dull?"

"It is not an evening at all, Master Auchester, it is a candle-light day, and so far from finding it dull, I find it a great deal too bright. I could listen for ever to Mr. Davy's voice."

"What can it be that makes his voice so sweet, when it is such a deep voice?"

"I know it is because he has never sung in theatres. It does make a deep voice rough to sing in theatres, unless a man does not begin to sing so for a long, very long time."

"Miss Benette, is that the reason you do not mean to sing in theatres?"

"No; but it is the reason I sing so much in my little room?"

"Mr. Davy says you don't mean to act."

"No more I do mean, but perhaps it will come upon me, and Thoné says 'child you must.'"

"She thinks you have a special gift, then?"

"Who said to you about the special gift, Master Auchester? Do you ever forget anything you hear?"

"Never! I am like Mr. Santonio. But Mr. Davy told me the night I asked him your name."

"Oh yes, I told him I had not a special gift. I thought the words so put together would please him, and I like to please him; he is good. I do not think it is a special gift you know, Master Auchester, to act."

"What is it then, Miss Benette?"

"An inspiration."

"Mr. Davy called the conducting at the Festival inspiration."

"Oh yes, but all great composers are inspired."

"Do you consider our Conductor was a great composer?"

"I dare say. But you must not ask me, I am not wise. Thoné is very wise, and she said to me the other day, after you were gone, 'he is one of us.'"

"But, Miss Benette, she is a gipsy, and I am not."

"We are not all alike because we are One. Can there be music without many combinations, and they each of many single sounds."

Mirandos was putting on the pedal, and we paused at this moment, as he paused, before the attacca. Santonio still remained in the doorway, and Davy was standing in the window against the crimson curtain, listening, and quite white with distress at the performance; for the keys every now and then jangled furiously, and a storm of arpeggi seemed to endanger the very existence of the fragile wires.

Suddenly a young lady swept past Santonio, and glanced at Davy in passing into our retreat. Santonio, of course, did not move an inch; certainly there was just room to clear him; but Davy fell back into the folds of the curtain, frowning, not at the young lady, but at the Fantasia.

It was Miss Lawrence; and lo! before I could well recognize her, she stepped up to me and said, without a bow or any introductory flourish, "Are you Mr. Davy's pupil?"

"We are both, Ma'am," I answered foolishly,

half indicating Miss Benette, who was bending her lashes into the firelight. Miss Lawrence replied lightly, yet seriously:

"Oh, I know *she* is, but you first, because I knew you again."

I gazed upon her at this crisis. She had a peculiar face, dark, yet soft; and her eye was very fine, large, and half closed, but not at all languid. Her forehead spread wide beneath jetty hair as smooth as glass, and her mouth was very satirical; capable of sweetness as such mouths alone are, though the case is often reversed. How satirical are some expressions that slumber in sweetness too exquisite to gaze on! And as for this young lady's manner, very easy was she, yet so high as to be unapproachable, unless she first approached you. Her accent was polished, or her address would have been somewhat brusque; as it was, it only required, not requested a reply. She went on all this time, through—"I saw you in the Chorus at the Festival, and I watched you well; and I saw you run out, and return with that water-glass I envied you in bearing. I hope you thought yourself enviable?"

"I certainly did not, because I could not think of myself at all."

"That is best; now will you, that is, can you tell me who the Conductor was?"

I forgot who she was, and imploringly my whole heart said, "Oh, do pray tell us! we have tried and tried to find out, and no one knows."

"No one knows! but I *will* know!" and she shook impatiently the rich coral negligée that hung about her throat—again with much bitterness in her tones, she resumed—"I think it was cruel and unjust besides not to tell us, that we at least might have thanked him. Even poor St. Michel was groaning over his ignorance of such a personage, if indeed he be a wight and not a sprite. I shall find a witch next."

"Thoné!" I whispered to Clara, and her lips parted to smile, but she looked not up.

And now a young man came in out of the company to look for Miss Lawrence.

"Oh, is Miss Lawrence here?" said Santonio, carelessly turning and looking over his shoulder to find her, though I dare say he knew she was there well enough. However, he came up now and took his stand by her side, and they soon began to talk. Rather relieved that the responsibility was taken off myself, I listened eagerly.

It was fascinating in the extreme to me to see how Miss Lawrence spurned the arm of the gentleman who had come to look for her, and to conduct her back; he was obliged to retire discomfited, and Santonio took no heed of him at all. I could not help thinking then, that Miss Lawrence must have been everywhere, and have seen everything to be so self-possessed, for I could quite distinguish between her self-possession and Clara's; the latter natural, the former acquired, however naturally worn.

It was not long, nevertheless, before I received a shock. It was something in this way. Miss Lawrence had reverted to the Festival, and she said to Santonio, "I had hopes of this young gentleman, because I thought he belonged to the Conductor, who spoke to him between the parts; but he is as wise as the rest of us, and I can only say my conviction bids fair to become my faith."

"Your conviction that you related to me in such a romantic narrative?" asked Santonio, without appearing much interested. But he warmed as he proceeded. "The wind was very poor at the Festival I heard."

"They always say so in London about county

performances, you know, either at least about the wind or the strings, or else one luckless oboe is held up to ridicule, or a solitary flute, or a desolate double-bass."

"But if the solitary flute or bass render themselves absurd, they should be ridiculed far more in a general orchestra than in a particular quartette or so, for the effect of the master-players thus goes for nothing. I never yet heard a stringed force go through an oratorio, and its violent exercises for the tutti, without falling at least a tone."

"Oh, the primi were very well! and, in fact, had all been flat together, it would have been unnoticeable; while the tempi were marked so clearly, no one had time to criticise and analyze. But the organ had better have been quiet altogether; it would have looked very well, and nobody would have known it was not sounding."

"I beg your pardon, every one would then have called out for more noise."

"Not so, Mr. Santonio, there was quite body enough. But there sat Erfurt, groping, as he always does, for the pedals, and punching the keys, while the stops, all out, could very often not be

got in, in time, and we had fortissimo against the fiddles."

"I wonder your Conductor did not give one little tap upon Erfurt's skull. So much for his own judgment, Miss Lawrence."

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Santonio; the grand point was making all go together, such as it was, so that no one realized a discrepancy anywhere. Interruptions would not only have been useless, they would have been ignorant; but in this person's strange intimacy with the exigencies of a somewhat unsteady orchestra, his consummate triumph was achieved."

"Well, I believe he will be found some time hence, in some out of the way hole, that shall deprive you all of enchantment."

"I do believe he is my wizard of Rothseneld."

"You are very credulous if you can so believe."

And they said much more. But what shocked me, had been the denuding treatment of my all-glorious Festival—my romance of perfectibility, my ideal world. How they talked—for I cannot remember the phrases they strung into cold chains, at much greater length than I record—of what had

been for me as Heaven outspread above in mystery and beauty, and as a heaven-imaging deep beneath, beyond my fathom, yet whereon I had exulted as on the infinite unknown! they making it instead, a Reality not itself all lovely—a Revelation not itself complete. I had not then mixed in the musical world—for there is such a world as is not Heaven, but Earth in the realm of Tone, and Tone-artists must pass, as it were, through it. How few receive not from it some touch, some taint of its clinging presence! How few, indeed, infuse into it—while in it they are necessitated to linger—the spirit of their heavenly home! Dimly, of a truth, had the life of music been then opened to my ken: but it seemed at that moment again enclosed, and I fell back into the first darkness. It was so sad to me to feel thus, that I could not for an instant recover my faith in myself. I fancied myself too insignificantly affected, and would, if I could, have joined in the anti-spiritual prate of Miss Lawrence and Santonio. Let me do them no injustice; they were both musicians, but I was not old enough to appreciate their actual enthusiasm, as it were, by mutual consent, a sealed subject between them.

I am almost tempted, after all, to say it is best not to tamper with our finest feelings—best to keep silence; but let me beware,—it is while we muse, the fire kindles, and we are then to speak with our tongues. Let *them* be touched too though, with the inward fire, or we have no right to speak.

CHAPTER XXI.

Oh, shame upon me, thus to ramble, when I should be restoring merely!

After the shock I mentioned, the best thing happened to me that was possible,—we had to sing again; and Clara's voice arising, like the souls of flowers, to the sun, became actually to me as the sun unto those flowery souls. I revived and recovered my warmth; but now the reaction had come, and I sang through tears. I don't know how my voice sounded, but I felt it return upon me, and Davy grew rather nervous, I knew, from his manner of accompanying. And I did not say that while Miss Lawrence had stood and chatted with Santonio, a noiseless rentrée of footmen had

taken place—they bearing salvers loaded with ices, and what are called creams, at evening parties.

A sort of interlude this formed of which the guests availed themselves to come and stare in upon us; and as they looked in we peeped out, though nobody ventured on our side beyond the doorway. So our duet had happened afterwards, and the music was to be resumed until twelve o'clock, the supper-hour. And after our duet there was performed this coda; that Miss Redfern requested Miss Lawrence to play with her, and that Miss Lawrence refused, but consented at Santonio's suggestion to play alone. As soon as she was seen past our folding-door, the whole male squadron advanced to escort her to the piano; but as she was removing her gloves leisurely, she waved them off, and they became of no account whatever in an instant. She sat down very still and played a brilliant prelude, a more than brilliant fugue short and sharp, then a popular air with variations, few but finely fingered; and at last after a few modulations, startling from the hand of a female, something altogether new, something fresh and mystical, that affected me painfully even at its opening notes. It was a movement of such intense mean-

ing, that it was but one sigh of unblended and unfaltering melody isolated as the fragrance of a single flower, and only the perfumes of nature exhale a bliss as sweet, how far more unexprest! This short movement that in its one-ness was complete, grew as it were by fragmentary harmonies intricate but most gradual, into another; a prestissimo so delicately fitful that it was like moonlight dancing upon crested ripples; or for a better similitude, like quivering sprays in a summer wind. And in less than fifty bars of regularly broken time—how ravishingly sweet I say not—the first subject in refrain flowed through the second, and they interwoven even as creepers and flowers densely tangled, closed together simultaneously. The perfect command Miss Lawrence possessed over the instrument did not in the least occur to me; I was possessed but by one idea. Yet too nervous to venture into that large room, I eagerly watched her, and endeavoured to arrest her eye that I might beckon her among us again; so resolute was I to ask her the name of the author. Santonio, as if really excited, had made a sort of rush to her and was now addressing her, but I heard not what they said, though Davy did, for he had followed Santo-

nio. To my surprise I saw that Miss Benette had taken herself into a corner, and when I gazed upon her she was wiping her eyes. I was reminded then that my own were running over.

Scarcely was I fit to look up again, having retreated to another corner, when I beheld Miss Lawrence in her blue brocade, come in and look about her. She absolutely advanced to me.

"Did you like that little dream? That is my notion of the gentleman at the Festival do you know."

"Did you compose it?" I asked in a maze.

"No, I believe he did."

"Then you know who he is; tell me, oh! tell me the name."

She smiled then at me with kindness, a beneficent sweetness. "Come sit down and I will sit by you and tell you the story."

"May not Miss Benette come too?"

"Oh certainly, if she is not more comfortable out there. I wish you would bring her though for I want to see her eyes." I slipped over the carpet, "Come Miss Benette and hear what Miss Lawrence is saying." She looked a little more serious with surprise, but followed me across the room and

took the next chair beyond mine. Santonio came up too, but Miss Lawrence said, "Go—you have heard it before," and he having to play again next, retired with careful dignity.

"You must know that once on a time, which means about three months ago,"—began Miss Lawrence, as if she were reading the introductory chapter of a new novel,—"I wanted some country air and some hard practice. I cannot get either in London, where I live; and I determined to combine the two. So I took a cottage in a lone part of Scotland—mountainous Scotland; but no one went with me except my maid, and we took care together of a grand pianoforte which I hired in Edinburgh, and carried on with me van and all.

"It was glorious weather just then, and when I arrived at my cottage I found it very difficult to practise, though very charming to play; and I played a great deal, often all the day until the evening, when I invariably ascended my nearest hill and inhaled the purest air in the whole world. My maid went always with me, and at such seasons I left my pianoforte sometimes shut and sometimes open, as it happened, in my parlour, which had a splendid prospect, and very wide

windows opening to the garden in front. I allowed these windows to remain open always when I went out, and I have often found Beethoven's sonatas strewed over the lawn when the wind blew freshly, as very frequently it did. You may believe I often prolonged my strolls until the sun had set and the moon arisen. So one time it happened, I had been at work the whole day upon a crabbed copy of studies by Bach and Handel, that my music-seller had smuggled for me from an old bureau in a Parisian warehouse. For you must know such studies are rarely to be found."

"Why not?" asked I rather abruptly, just as if it had been Millicent who was speaking.

"Oh, just because they are rare practice, I suppose. But listen, or our tale will be cut off short, as I see Santonio is about to play."

"Oh make haste then, pray!"

And she resumed in a vein more lively.

"The whole day I had worked, and at evening I went out. The sunshine had broken from dark moist clouds all over those hills. The first steep I climbed was profusely covered with honeysuckle, and the rosy gold of the clusters, intermixed with the heather, just there a perfect

surface, pleased me so much that I gathered more than I could well hold in both my arms. Victorine was just coming out—that is my handmaid—and I returned past her to leave my flowers at home. It struck me first to throw them over the palings upon the little lawn, but second thoughts determined me to carry them in-doors for a sketch or something. I got into my parlour by the glass door, and flung them all, fresh as they were, and glimmering with rain-drops, upon the music-stand of the pianoforte. I cannot tell you why I did it, but so it was; and I had a fancy that they would be choice companions for those quaint studies which yet lay open upon the desk.

"In that lone place, such was its beauty and its virtue, we never feared to leave the windows open or the doors all night unlocked; and I think it very possible I may have left the little gate of the front garden swinging after me; for Victorine always latched it, as she came last.

"At all events I found her on the top of the honeysuckle height, carrying a camp-stool and looking very tired. The camp-stool was for her, as I always reposed on the grass wrapped in a veritable tartan. And this night I reposed a good

deal to make a flying sunset sketch. Then I stayed to find fault with my dry earth and wooden sky, and the heather with neither gold nor bloom upon it; then to watch the shadows creep up the hill, and then the moon, and then the lights in the valley, till it was just nine o'clock. Slowly strolling home I met nobody, except a shadow—that is to say, as I was moving no faster myself than a snail, I suddenly saw a long figure upon the ground flit by me in the broad moonlight.

"'It was a gentleman in a cloak,' said Victorine, but I had seen no person, only, as I have said, a shadow, and took no note.

"'He had a sketching-book like Mademoiselle's, and was pale,' added Victorine; but I bade her be silent as she was too fond of talking; still I replied, 'Every body looks pale by moonlight;' —a fact to be ascertained, if anywhere, on a moonlit moor.

"So I came home across the lawn, and got in at my window. I rang for candles: it was not dark, certainly, but I wanted to play. I stood at the window till the good wife of the house, from her little kitchen, brought them up. She placed them upon the piano, as I had always ordered her to do,

and left the room. After I had watched the moonlight out of doors for some time, being lazy with that wild air, I walked absently up to the instrument. What had taken place there? Behold the Bach and Handel discarded, lay behind the desk, having been removed by some careful hand, and on the desk itself, still overhung with the honeysuckle and heather I had hastily tossed about it, I found a sheet of music paper. I could not believe my eyes for a long time. It was covered with close delicate composition, so small as to fill a double page, and distinct as any printing. It had this inscription, but no name, no notice else:—'Heather and Honeysuckle, a Tone-wreath from the Northern Hills.'"

"And that was what you played oh Miss Lawrence!" I cried, less in ecstacy at the sum of the story than at my own consciousness of having anticipated its conclusion.

"Yes, that is what I played, and what I very seldom do play; but I thought you should hear it!"

"I!" I cried, much too loud under the circumstances; but I could not have helped it. "It was very kind of you, but I don't know why you should; but it is by *him* then?"

"You have said!" answered Miss Lawrence, laughing; "at least I think so. And if you and I agree, no doubt we are right."

"No, I don't see that at all," I replied; for it was a thing I could not allow. "I am only a little boy, and you are a great player, and grown up. Besides you saw his shadow."

"Do you think so? Well, I thought so myself, though it may possibly have been the shadow of somebody else."

Miss Lawrence here stopped that she might laugh, and as she laughed her deep eyes woke up and shone like fire-flies glancing to and fro. Very Spanish she seemed then, and very Jewish withal. I had never seen a Spaniard I suppose then, but I conceive I had met with prints of Murillo's Flower Girl; for her eyes were the only things I could think of while Miss Lawrence laughed.

"At all events," she at last continued, "the Tone-wreath is no shadow." I was astonished here to perceive that Clara had raised her eyes; indeed they looked fully into those of the speaker.

"He came from Germany, you can be sure, at least."

"Why so, Miss Benette?" replied Miss Law-

rence, graciously, but with a slight deference, very touching from one so self sustained.

"Because it is only in that land they call music Tone."

"But still he may have visited Germany and have listened to the Tongedicht of Beethoven; for *he* is not so long dead." And she sighed so deeply that I felt a deep passion indeed must have exhaled that sigh. I got out of my chair, and ran to Lenhart Davy, for I saw him yet in the curtain. He detained me, saying, "My dear little boy, do stay by me and sit awhile, that you may grow calm; for verily Charles, your eyes are dancing almost out of your head. Besides I should like you to *see* Mr. Santonio while he plays."

"Will he turn his face this way though, Mr. Davy? for he did not before."

"I particularly requested him to do so, and he agreed, on purpose that you might look at him." In fact Santonio had taken up the gilt music-stand and very coolly turned it towards us, in the very centre of the company, who shrank with awe from his immediate presence, and left a circle round him. Then, as Mirandos, who had to play

a trifling negative accompaniment to the stringed solo, advanced to the piano, the lord of the violin turned round and nodded at me, as he himself took his seat.

CHAPTER XXII.

We, that is—Miss Benette and Davy and I, came away from the Redferns all in a hurry, just before supper—Santonio having informed us that he intended to stay. He, indeed, if I recollect right, took Miss Lawrence down, and I have a dim remembrance of Mirandos poking haughtily in the back-ground. Also I remember our conversation on returning home, and that Davy informed us Miss Lawrence was immensely rich. She had lost her mother when a baby, he said; but I thought her very far from pitiable, she seemed to do so exactly as she pleased. I had no idea of her age, and I did not think about it at all; but Miss Benette said, "She is as independent as she is

gifted, Sir, and she spoke to me like one who is very generous."

"Yes, I should think so," said Davy, cheerfully; "Santonio tells me she is a pupil of Milans-André."

"Oh!" I cried, "how I wish I had known that."

"Why so, my dear boy?"

"Because I would have asked her what he is like; I do so want to know."

"She does not admire him so wonderfully, Santonio says; and soon tired of his instructions. I suppose the fact is she can get on very well alone."

"But I wish I had asked her, Sir," I again said, "because we should be quite sure about the Conductor."

"But you forget Miss Lawrence was at the Festival, Charles, and that she saw you there. Come! my boy, you are not vain."

"No Sir, I don't think I am. Oh! Miss Benette, you laughed!"

"Yes, Master Auchester, because you could be no more vain than I am."

"Why not, Miss Benette?"

"Because we could neither of us be vain, side by side with our Tone-Master," she answered with

such a childlike single-heartedness, that I was obliged to look at Davy to see how he bore it. It was very nearly dark, yet I could make out the lines of a smile upon his face.

"I am very proud to be called so, Miss Benette, but it is only a name in my case, with which I am well pleased my pupils should amuse themselves."

"Master Auchester!" exclaimed Miss Benette, without replying to Davy at all, "you can ask Miss Lawrence about Mons. Milans-André, if you please, for she is coming to see my work, and I think it will be to-morrow that she will come."

"Oh thank you Miss Benette! I suppose Miss Lawrence said that to you when Mr. Davy called me away to him?"

"I did not call you, Charles, you came yourself."

"But you kept me, Sir"—and it struck me on the instant that Davy's delicate device ought not to have been touched upon, so I felt awkward and kept silence.

I was left at home first, and promised Clara I would come, should my mother and the weather agree to permit me. I was hurried to bed by Clo, who had sat up to receive me. I was disappointed at not seeing Millicent, with the unreasonableness

which is exclusively fraternal; but Clo informed me that my mother would not permit her to stay out of bed.

"And Charles you must not say one word to-night, but eat this slice of bacon and this egg directly, and let me take off your comforter."

The idea of eating eggs and bacon! I managed the egg, but it was all I could do, and then she presented me with a cup of hot barley-water. Oh! have you ever tasted barley-water with a squeeze of lemon juice, after listening to the violin? I drank it off, and was just about to make a rush at the door, when Clo stopped me.

"My dear Charles! Margareth is gone up to bed, stay until I can light you with my candle. And come into my room to undress, that you may not wake my mother by throwing your brush down."

I was marched off impotent, she preceding me up the stairs with a stately step. But softly as we passed along, Millicent heard us; she just opened a little bit of her door, and stooped to kiss me in her white dressing-gown. "I have chosen my instrument," I said in a whisper, and she smiled. "Ah, Charles!"

I need not recapitulate my harangue the next

morning when I came down late, and found only Millicent left to make my breakfast. I was expected to be idle, and the rest had gone out to walk. But I wondered when I came to think, that I had been so careless as to omit asking Clara the hour fixed for Miss Lawrence's visit; though perhaps, was my after-thought, she did not know herself. I need not have feared though, for while I was lying about on the sofa after our dinner, having been informed that I must do so or I should not practise in the evening, in came Margareth with a little white note directed to "Master Charles Auchester."

"I am sure, Master Charles," said she, "you ought to show it to my mistress, for the person that brought it was no servant in any family hereabouts, and looks more like a gipsy than anything else."

"Well, and so it is a gipsy, Margareth. Of course I shall tell my mother—I know all about it."

Margareth wanted to know, I was sure. but I did not enlighten her further; besides I was in too great a hurry to break the seal—a quaint little impression of an eagle carrying in his beak an oak-branch. The note was written in a hand full of

character, yet so orderly it made me feel ashamed. It was as follows:

"Dear Sir,

"The young lady is here, and I said you wished to come. She has no objection, and will stay to see you.

"CLARA BENETTE."

How like her! I thought; and then with an unpardonable impulse—I don't defend myself in the least—I flew out of the house as if my shoes had been made of satin. I left the note open upon the table—it was in the empty breakfast-room where I had been lolling—meaning thereby to save my credit; like a simpleton as I was, for it contained not one word of explanation.

A carriage was at the door of that corner house in St. Anthony's Lane, a dark-green carriage; very handsome, very plain, with a pair of beautiful horses: the coachman, evidently tired of waiting, was just going to turn their heads.

When I got into the room up-stairs, or rather while yet upon the stairs, I smelt some refined sort of foreign scent I had once before met with in my

experience, namely when my mother had received a present of an Indian shawl, in an Indian box, from an uncle of her's who had gone out to India, and laid his bones there. When I really entered, Miss Lawrence, in a chair by the table, was examining some fresh specimens of Miss Benette's work, outspread upon the crimson as before. I abruptly wished Clara good day, and immediately her visitor held out her hand to me. This lady made me feel queer by daylight; I could not realize, scarcely recognize her. She looked not so brilliant, and now I found that she was slightly sallow; her countenance might have been called heavy from its peculiar style; still I admired her eyes, though I discerned no more fireflies in her glance. She was dressed in a great shawl—red I think it was—with a black bonnet and feather; and her gloves were so loose they seemed as if they would fall off: she had an air of even more fashionable ease than ever, and I, not knowing that it *was* fashionable ease, felt so abashed under its influence, that I could not hold up my head.

She went on talking about the work; I found she wished to purchase some; but Clara would not part with any of that which was upon the table,

because it was for the Quakers in Albemarle Square. But she was very willing to work specially for Miss Lawrence. I thought I had never seen Clara so calm; I wondered she could be so calm; at once she seemed to me like myself, a child, so awfully grown up did Miss Lawrence appear. I beheld, too, that the latter lady glanced often stealthily round and round the room, and I did not like her the better for it; I thought she was curious and very fine besides; so the idea of asking her about Milans-André passed out of my brain completely.

She had, as I said, been discussing the work—she gave orders for embroidered handkerchiefs, and was very particular about the flowers to be worked upon them; and she gave orders for a muslin apron, to be surrounded with vandykes, and to have vandyked pockets—for a toilette cushion and a veil—and then she said, "Will you have the goodness to send them to the Priory when they are finished; my friends live there, and will send them on to me. I wish to pay for them now"—and she laid a purse upon the table.

"I think there is too much gold here, Ma'am," said Clara innocently.

"I know precisely the cost of work, Miss Benette —such work as your's is besides priceless. Recollect you find my materials. That is sufficient, if you please." And to my astonishment, and rather dread, she turned full upon me as I was standing at the table.

"You wish to know what Milans-André is like, Master Charles Auchester, for that is your name, I find. Well, thus much: he is not like you, and he is not like Santonio, nor like the unknown Conductor, nor like your favourite Mr. Davy. He is narrow at the shoulders, with long arms, small white hands, and a handsome face rather too large for his body. He plays wonderfully, and fills a large theatre with one pianoforte. He is very amiable, but not kind; and very famous, but not beloved."

What an extraordinary description! I thought; and I involuntarily added, "I thought he was your master."

She seemed touched, and answered generously, "I am afraid you think me ungrateful, but I owe nothing to him. Ah! you owe far more to your master, Mr. Davy."

I was pleased, and replied, "Oh, I know that! but I should like to hear Milans-André play."

"You will be sure to hear him. He will, ere long, become common, and play everywhere. But if I had a piano here, I could show you exactly how he plays, and could play you a piece of his music."

I thought it certainly a strange mistake in punctilio, for Miss Lawrence to refer to the want of a piano in that room,—but I little knew her. She paused too, as she said it, and looked at Clara. Clara did not blush, nor did her sweet face change.

"I am very sorry that I have no piano. I am to have one some day, when I grow rich; but Mr. Davy is kind enough to teach me at his house, and I sing to his piano, there. I wish I had one, though, that you might play, Miss Lawrence."

The fire-flies all at once sparkled, almost dazzled from the eyes of Miss Lawrence—a sudden glow, which was less colour than light, beamed all over her face. I could tell she was enchanted about something or other, at least she looked so.

"Oh, Miss Benette!" she answered, in a genial tone: "you are very very rich, with such a voice

as your's, and such power to make it perfect, as you possess."

Clara smiled: "Thank you for saying so;" Miss Lawrence had risen to go, yet she still detained herself, as having something left to do or say.

"I should like to see you both again, and to hear you. You, Miss Benette, I am sure of, but I also expect to discover something very wonderful about Master Charles Auchester. You are to be a singer, of course?" she quickly said to me.

"I hope I shall be a player, if I am to be anything."

"What! another Santonio? or another Milans-André?"

"Oh, neither; but I must learn the violin."

"Oh, is that it? Have you begun, and how long?"

"Not yet, I have no violin; but I mean to begin very soon."

"Only determine, and you will. Farewell!"

She had passed out, leaving a purse upon the table, containing fifty guineas. Miss Benette opened it, turned out the coins one by one, and,

full of trouble, said, "Oh, whatever shall I do! I shall be so unhappy to keep it."

"But that is wrong, Miss Benette, because you deserve it. She is quite right."

"No, but I will keep it, because she is generous, and I can see how she loves to give."

CHAPTER XXIII.

LAURA was at the next class. I had almost forgotten her until I saw her eyes. I felt quite wicked when I perceived how thin and transparent the child had grown,—wicked, to have thought so little of her in suffering, while I had been enjoying myself. I cannot give the least idea how large her eyes looked, they quite frightened me. I was not used to see persons just out of illness. Her hair, too, was cut much shorter, and altogether I did not admire her so much. I felt myself again wicked for this very reason, and was quite unhappy about it. She gave me a nod. Her cheeks were quite pale, and usually they were very pink; this

also affected me deeply. Clara appeared, to counter-charm me, and I saw no other immediately.

"Ah Laura dear! you are looking quite nice again, so pretty!" said this sweet girl, as she took her seat; and then she stooped down and kissed the little dancer.

I found myself rather in the way, for to Clara it seemed quite natural to scatter happiness with her very looks. She turned to me, after whispering with Laura.

"She wants to thank you for the flowers, but she does not like to speak to you."

I was positively ashamed, and to hide my confusion, said to Laura, "Do you like violets?"

"Yes, but I like large flowers better. I like red roses and blue cornflowers."

I did not care for cornflowers myself, except among the corn, and I thought it very likely Laura took the poppies for roses; still I did not set her right, it was too much trouble. But if I had known I should never see her again—I mean see her as she then was—I should have taken more care to do her kindness. Is it not ever so? Clara entirely engaged me; in fact I was getting quite used *not* to do without

her. How well I remember that evening: we sang a service. Davy had written several very simple ones, and I longed to perform them in public, that is to say, in the singing gallery of our church; but I might as well have aspired to sing them up in Heaven, so utterly would they have been spurned as innovatory.

It was this evening I felt for the first time what I suppose all boys feel at one time or another, that they cannot remain always just as they are. It was no satiety, it was no disappointed hope, nor any vague desire; it was purely a conviction that some change was awaiting me. I suppose, in fact, it was a presentiment. The voices of our choir seemed thin and far away; the pale cheek of Lenhart Davy seemed stamped with unearthly lustre; the room and roof were wider, higher; the evening colours, clustered in the shape of windows, wooed to that distant sky. I was agitated—ecstatic. I could not sing; and when I listened I was bewildered in more than usual excitement. Snatches of hymns and ancient psalms, morsels of the Bible, lullabies and bells, speeches of no significance, uttered years and, as it seemed, centuries ago; floated into my brain and through it,

despite the present, and made there a murmurons clamour, like the din of a mighty city wafted to the ear of one who stands on a commanding hill. I mention this to prove that presentiment is not a fatuity, but something mysterious in its actuality; like love, like joy; perhaps a passion of memory, that anticipates its treasures and delights *to be*.

"What beautiful words!" said Clara, in a whisper that seemed to have more sweetness than other whispers, just as some shadows have more symmetry than other shadows. She meant, "Unto whom I sware in my wrath," and the rest.

"Yes," I answered, "I like those words, all of them, and the way they are put. I always liked them when I was a little boy."

It was very hard to Miss Benette not to reply here, I could tell, she so entirely agreed with me; but Davy was recalling our attention. When the class was over she resumed —

"I know exactly what you mean, for I used to feel it at the old church in London, where I went with Mr. Davy's aunt, and could not see above the pew, it was so high"

"Did you like her, Miss Benette? Is she like him?"

"No, not much; she is a good deal stricter, but she is exceedingly good; taller than he is, with much darker eyes. She taught me so much, and was so kind to me, that I only wonder I did not love her a great deal more."

I felt rather aghast, for, to tell the truth, I only wonder when I love; never, when I am indifferent as to most persons. As we were going out I asked leave to come and practise on the morrow. I felt I *must* come. I wonder what I should have done had she refused me. "Certainly, Master Auchester." But she was looking after Laura. "Let me pin up that shawl, dear, and tie my veil upon your bonnet; mind you wear it down in the street." The child certainly seemed to have put on her clothes in a dream, for her great shawl trailed a yard behind her on the floor, and did not cover her shoulders at all. Her bonnet-strings, now very disorderly indeed, were entangled in a knot, which Clara patiently endeavoured to divide. I waited as long as I dared, but Davy was staying for me I knew, and at last he waved his hand. I could no longer avoid seeing him, and said to Clara, "Good night." She smiled, but did not

rise; she was kneeling before Laura. "Good night, Miss Lemark."

She only looked up. The large eyes seemed, like the drops of rain after a drenching shower within the chalice of some wood anemone, too heavy for the fragile face in which they were set, and from which they gazed as if unconscious of gazing. I thought to myself, as I went out,—she will die, I suppose;—but I did not tell Davy so, because of his reply when I had first spoken of Laura's illness. I felt very dispirited though, and shrank from the notion, though it still obtruded itself. Davy was very quiet. I recollect it to have been a white foggy night, and more keen than cold; perhaps that was the reason, as he was never strong in health. When I came to our door—how well I remember it!—I pulled him in upon the mat, before he well knew what I was about.

"Oh! Master Charles," exclaimed Margareth, who was exclusive porteress in our select establishment, "your brother has brought you a parcel—a present, no doubt."

"Oh, my goodness! where is Fred?"

"They are all in the parlour; but Sir, won't you walk in?"

"I beg your pardon," said Davy, absently, "Oh no! I am going back. Good night, Charles."

"Oh dear! Mr. Davy, do stay and see my present, please!"

Davy did not answer here, for the parlour door opened, and my mother appeared benign and hospitable.

"Come in! come in!" she said, extending her hand, and I, at least, was in before she was out of the parlour. Fred was there, and Fred's wife, a pretty black-haired little matron full of trivialities and full of sympathy with Lydia, was sitting by that respected sister at a little table. I ran to shake hands with Mrs. Fred, and knocked over the table. Alas! they were making bead purses, and, for a few moments, there was a restoration of chaos among their elements. Clo came from a dark corner where she was wide awake over Dean Prideaux, and my mother had raised her hands in some dismay, when I was caught up by Fred and lifted high into the air.

"Well, and what do I hear," &c.

"Oh, Fred, where is my present?"

"Present, indeed! Such as it is it lies out there. *Nobody* left it at the office, so Vincent tells me;

but I found it there among the packages, and was strongly inclined to consider it a mistake altogether. Certainly 'Charles Auchester, Esq.' was not 'known there;' but I smelt plum-cake, and that decided me to have it opened here."

I rushed to the chair behind the sofa, while the rest—except Millicent and Mr. Davy, who were addressing each other in the low voice which is the test of all human proprieties—were scolding in various styles. The fracas was no more to me than the jingling of the maternal keys. I found a large oblong parcel rolled in the thickest of brown papers, and tied with the thickest of strings round and round again so firmly, that it was, or appeared to be, hopeless to open it, unless I gnawed that cord.

"Oh, Lydia lend me your scissors!"

"For shame, Charles!" pronounced Clo. "How often have I bidden you never to waste a piece of string."

She absolutely began upon those knots with her fingers; my own trembled so violently that they were useless. Meanwhile, for she was about ten minutes engaged in the neat operation, I scanned the address. It was as Fred had mentioned to

me, as an adult and as an Esquire, and the writing was bold, black, and backward. It seemed to have come a long way, and smelt of travelling; also, when the paper was at length unfolded, it smelt of tow, and something oblong was muffled in the tow.

"A box," observed sapient Clotilda. I tore the tow out in handfuls. "Don't strew it upon the carpet, oh, my dearest Charles!"—Clo, I defy you!—It was a box truly, but what sort of box? It had a lid and a handle; it was also fastened with little hooks of brass. It was open, I don't know how. There it lay—there lay a real violin in the velvet lining of its varnished case!

No, I could not bear it. It was of no use to try. I did not touch it, nor examine it. I flew away up stairs. I shut myself into the first room I came to, which happened to be Lydia's; but I did not care. I rushed up to the window and pressed my face against the cold glass. I sobbed; my head beat like a heart in my brain; I wept rivers. I don't suppose the same thing ever happened to any one else; therefore none can sympathize. It was mystery, it was passion, it was infinitude; it was to a soul like mine, a romance so deep, that it has never

needed other. My violin was mine and I was it; and the beauty of my romance was, in truth, an ideal charmer;—for be it remembered that I knew no more how to handle it, than I should have known how to conduct at the Festival.

The first restoring fact I experienced was the thin yet rich vibration of that very violin. I heard its voice, somebody was trying it—Davy no doubt; and that marvellous quality of tone which I name a double one-ness; resulting no doubt from the so often treated harmonics; reached and pierced me up the staircase, and through the closed door. I could not endure to go down, and presently when I had begun to feel rather ghostly, for it was dead-dark, I heard somebody come up and grope first here, then there, overhead and about to find me; but I would not be found until all the places had been searched where I did not happen to be hidden. Then the person came to my door;—it was Millicent, she drew me into the passage.

"Oh! I can't go down."

"Darling do, for my sake! they are all so pleased. Mr. Davy has been playing, and he says it is a real Amati."

"But don't let Fred touch it, please Millicent!" For I had a vague idea it would not like to be touched by Fred.

"Why no one *can* touch it but Mr. Davy. Not even *you*, Charles. Do come down stairs now and look at it."

I went. Mr. Davy was holding it yet, but the instant I entered he advanced and placed it between my arms. I embraced it, much as young ladies embrace their first wax dolls, but with emotions as sweet, as deep, as mystical, as those of the youth who first presses to his soul the breathing presence of his earliest love. I saw then that this violin was a tiny thing—a very fairy of a fiddle; it was certainly not new, but I did not know how very old it was, and should not have been the least aware how valuable it was, and of what a precious costliness, but for Davy's observation, "Take care of it, Charles, and it will make you all you wish to be. I rather suspect Santonio will envy you its possession when he has tried it."

"But is he to try it then, Mr. Davy?"

"Your mother has given me leave to ask him, if I see him, but I fear he has already returned to London." Davy glanced here at my mother with

a peculiar expression, and resumed—"I am going to write to him, at all events, about another subject, or rather upon the same subject."

"Oh Mr. Davy! I will talk to my little boy myself."

"Certainly Madam, I will not anticipate you."

"Charles dear," said Clo, "you must have your supper now."

It appeared to me that I had already had it, but I restored my doll to its cradle in silence, and ate unconsciously. Fred's presence at the board stimulated his lady and Lydia to extreme festivity, and they laughed the whole time; but Millicent was pale, and Davy quiet, and he departed as soon as he possibly might. But a smile of sweetness all his own, and of significance sweeter than sweetness, brightened his frank adieu for me into the day-spring of my decided destiny.

PART II.

The Violin and the Violet.

CHAPTER I.

THE next morning my mother redeemed her promise. It was directly after breakfast when she had placed herself in the chair at the parlour window. She made no allusion to the evening before, until she completed this arrangement of her's, and then she looked so serious as I stood before her, that I fully expected something I should not like.

"Charles," she said, "you are very dear to me, and perhaps you have given me more care than all my children, though you are the youngest. I have often wondered what you would be or become as a member of society, and it was the last of all my thoughts for you that you must leave me to be

educated. But if you are to be a musician, you must be taken from me soon, or you will never grow into what we should both of us desire—a first-rate artist. I could not wish you to be anything less than first-rate, and now you are very backward."

"Am I to go to London then, mother?" I shook in every limb.

"I believe a first-rate musical education for you in London would be beyond my means. It is upon this subject your friend Mr. Davy is to be so good as to write to Santonio, who can tell us all about Germany, where higher advantages can be obtained more easily than anywhere in England. But Charles, you will have to give up a great deal if you go; and learn to do everything for yourself. If you are ill you will have to do without nursing and petting as you would have here; and if you are unhappy you must not complain away from home. Also you must work hard, or you will lose your free self-approval, and be miserable at the end. I should be afraid to let you go if I did not know you are musical enough to do your duty by music, and loving enough to do your duty by your mother; also that you are a true boy, and will not

take to false persons. But it is hard to part with you, my child; and indeed we need not think of that just yet."

I did though, I am ashamed to say, and I wanted to set off on the next day. I knew this to be impossible, and the fact that consoled me was the very one of my unstrung ignorance, for I had a vague impression that Davy would tune me up before I left home. I could not see him that morning—my excitement was intense—I could not even cut a caper, for I had to do my lessons, and Clo always behaved about my lessons, as if they were to go on for ever, and I was by no means to grow any older. She was especially stationary on this morning, and I had nothing for it but to apply very hard indeed. My copy was more crabbed than ever, but while she commented so gravely thereupon, I thought of what Santonio had said about my arm and hand. I was not vain, I have not a tincture of vanity all through me, but I was very proud, and also most demurely humble.

At dinner, Millicent talked to me of my prospects, but I pretended not to admit them in all their magnificence; the prophetic longing was so

painful to me, that I dared not irritate it. So she rallied me in vain, and I ate a great deal of rice-pudding to simulate occupation. Dinner over, they all retired to their rooms; I to my violin in a corner of the parlour. I hung over it as it lay in its case; I fed upon it in spirit; but I did not take it out, I was afraid of any one coming in. At last, I spread my pocket-handkerchief upon the case, and sitting down upon it, went to sleep in scarcely conscious possession. I did not dream anything particular, though I suppose I ought to have done so, and it had been better for these unilluminated pages, but when I awoke it was late, that is, late for my engagement with Miss Benette.

I ran all the way, and as I reached my resting-place, it occurred to me that I should have to tell her I was going to Germany. How glad she would be, and yet a little sorry; for I had an idea she liked me, or I should never have gone near her. Vaulting into the passage, I heard strange sounds. Singing—but not only singing. More and more wonders! I thought, and I dashed up-stairs. The sounds ceased when I knocked at the door, which Clara came to open. I gazed in first, before I even

noticed her, and beheld in the centre of the room a small polished pianoforte. I flew in, and up to it, and breathlessly surveyed it.

"Miss Benette, where did that come from? I thought you were not to have a piano for ever so long."

She came to me, and replied with her steady, sweet voice, a little agitated:—

"Oh! Master Auchester, I wish you could tell me who it came from, that I might give that person my heart quite full of thanks. I can only believe it comes from some one who loves Music more than all things—some one rich, whom Music has made richer than could all money. It is such a sweet, darling, beautiful thing, to come to me! such a precious glory to make my heart so bright!"

The tears filled her eyes, and looking at her, I perceived that she had lately wept—the veins of harebell-blue seemed to quiver round the lids.

"Oh, Miss Benette! I had a violin sent me too, and I thought it was from Mr. Davy, but now I feel quite sure it was from that lady."

Clara could scarcely speak, I had never seen her so overcome, but she presently answered:

"I believe it was the young lady. I hope so, because I should like her to be made happy by remembering we have both got through her what we wanted more than anything in the world. She would not like to be thanked though, so we ought not to grieve that we cannot express our gratitude."

"I should like to know really, though; because it seems so strange she should recollect *me*."

"Oh, Master Auchester, no! Any one can see the music in your face, who has the music in his heart. Besides, she saw you at the Festival, and how anxious you were to serve the great gentleman."

"Now, Miss Benette, I am to tell you something."

"How good! do go on."

I laid my arm on the piano, but scarcely knew how to begin.

"What is it to do, then?" asked Clara, winningly.

"I am going really to be a musician, Miss Benette. I am going to Germany."

She did not reply at first, but when I looked up, it was as though she had not wept, so bright she beamed.

"That's all right; I knew you would. Oh! if she knew how much good she had done, how happy she would be! How happy she will be when she goes to a concert some day. in some year to come, and sees you stand up, and hears you praise music in the voice it loves best!"

"Do you think so? Do you think it is the best voice of music?"

"Because it is like the voice of a single soul, I do. But Mr. Davy says we cannot know the power of an orchestra of souls."

"*I* can."

"Oh! I beg your pardon! I forgot."

"But I don't think that I remember well. for whenever I try to think of it, I seem only to see his face, and hear his voice speaking to me, and saying, 'above all, the little ones!'"

"How pretty it was! You will be sure to see him in Germany, and then you can ask him whether he wrote the 'Tone-Wreath.'"

Oh. how I laughed again!

"What sort of place shall I go to, should you think?"

"I don't know any place, really, Master Auchester. I can't tell what places they have, to

learn at, upon the Continent. I know no places besides this house, and Mr. Davy's, and the class, and church, and Miss Lenhart's house, in London."

"Are you not very dull?"

Alas! for the excitable nature of my own temperament! I was sure I should be dull in her place, though I had never felt it until my violin came upon me, stealthy and stirring, as first love. She looked at me with serene wonder.

"I don't know what dull means. I do not want anything I have not got, because I shall have everything I want, some day I mean, and I would rather not have all at once."

I did not think anything could be wanting to her, indeed, in loveliness or aspiration, for my religious belief was in both for her; still I fancied it impossible she should not sometimes feel impatient, and especially as those blue shadows I have mentioned had softened the sweetness of her eyes, and the sensation of tears stole over me as I gazed upon her.

"We shall not practise much, I am afraid Master Auchester, for I want to talk, and I am so silly, that when I sing I begin to cry."

"For pleasure, I suppose. I always do."

"Not all for pleasure. I am vexed, and I do not love myself for being vexed. Laura is going to Paris, Master Auchester, to study under a certain master there. Her papa is going, too, and that woman I do not like. She is unhappy to leave me, but they have filled her head with pictures, and she is wild for the big theatres. She came to see me this morning, and I talked to her a long time. It was that made me cry."

"Why, particularly?"

"Because I told her so many things about the sort of people she will see, and how to know what is beautiful in people who are not wise. She promised to come and live with me when I have been to Italy, and become a singer, but till then I shall perhaps never meet her, for our ways are not the same. She looked with her clear eyes right through me to see if I was grave, and if she only finds her art is fair, I shall not be afraid for her."

"But is she not ill? I never saw anybody look so strange."

"That is because her hair is shorter. You do not like her, Master Auchester."

I shook my shoulders. "No, not a great deal."

"You will try, please. She will be an *artist*."

"But don't you consider—of course I don't know—but don't you consider dancing the lowest art?"

"Oh Master Auchester! all the arts help each other, and are all in themselves so pure, that we cannot say one is purer than the other. Besides, was it not in the dream of that Jew, in the Bible, that the angels descended as well as ascended?"

"You are like Martin Luther."

"Why so?"

"Clo, that is my clever sister, told me what he said about the arts and religion."

"Oh, Mr. Davy tells that story."

"Miss Benette, you are very naughty! You seem to know everything that everybody says."

"No,—it is because I see so few people, that I remember all they say."

"Are you not at *all* fonder of music, than of dancing? Oh Miss Benette!"

She laughed heartily, showing one or two of her twinkling teeth.

"I am fonder of music than of anything that lives or is, or rather I am not fond of it at all, but it is my life, though I am only a young child in

that life at present. But I am rather fond of dancing I must confess."

"I think it is charming, and I can dance very well, particularly on the top of a wall. But I do not care about it you know."

"You mean it is not enough for you to make you either glad or sorry. But be thankful that it is enough for some people."

"All things make me glad and sorry too I think. Going away now. When I come back— "

"I shall be gone," said Clara.

"I shall be a man—"

"And I an old woman—"

"For shame! Miss Benette, you will never grow old I believe."

"Oh yes I shall, but I do not mind. It will be like a summer night to grow old."

"I am sure it will!" I cried, with an enthusiasm that seemed to surprise her, so unconscious was she ever of any effect she had.

"But I shall grow old too, and there is not so very much difference between us. So then I shall seem your age, and Miss Benette when I do grow up, will you be my friend?"

"Always, Master Auchester, if you still wish it.

And in my heart I do believe that friends are friends for ever."

The sweet smile she gave me, the sweeter words she spoke, were sufficient to assure me I should not be forgotten, and it was all I wished, for then my heart was fixed upon my future.

"But you will not be going to-morrow, I suppose?"

"No, I wish I were."

"So do I."

"Thank you!" said I, rather disconcerted, "I shall go very soon, I suppose."

"It will not be long, I dare say," she answered, with another sweetest smile, and I felt it to be her kind wish for me, and was consoled. And when I left her she was standing quietly by her piano, nor did she raise her eyes to follow me to the door.

By one of those curious chances that befal some people more than others, I had a cold the next class-night. I was in an extremity of passion to be kept at home, that is to say I rolled in my stifling bed with the sulks pressing heavily on my heart, and the headache upon my forehead. Millicent sat by me, and laughingly assured me I should soon be quite well again; I solemnly

averred I should never be well, should never get up, should never see Davy any more, never go to Germany. But I went to sleep after all, for Davy with his usual philanthropy, came all the way up to the house to inquire for me after the class, and his voice aroused and soothed me together. I may say that such a cold was a Godsend just then, as it prevented my having to do any lessons. The next day, being idle, I heard nothing of Davy, neither the next. I thought it very odd, but on the third morning I was permitted to go out, as it was very clear and bright. The smoke looked beautiful, almost like another kind of flame as it swelled skywards, and I met Davy quite glowing with exercise.

"What a day for December!" said he, and cheerily held up a letter.

"Oh Mr. Davy!" I cried, but he would not suffer me even to read the superscription.

"First for your mother. Will you turn back and walk home with me?"

"I must not, Sir, I am to walk to the turnpike and back."

"Away then! and I am very glad to hear it."

To do myself justice I did not even run. I

could indeed, for all my impatient hope, scarcely help feeling there is no such blessing as pure fresh air that fans a brow whose fever has lately faded; I came at length to the toll-gate, and returned, braced for any adventure, to the door of my own home. I flew into the parlour, my mother and Davy were alone. My mother was wiping off a tear or two, and he seemed smiling on purpose.

"Oh mother!" I exclaimed, running up to her, "please don't cry."

"My dear Charles, you are a silly little boy. After all what will you do in Germany?"

She lifted me upon her lap. Davy walked up to the book-case.

"I find Charles that you must go immediately, and indeed it will be best if you travel with Mr. Santonio, and how could I send you alone with such an opportunity to be taken care of? Mr. Davy, will you have the kindness to read that letter to my little boy?"

Davy thus admonished, gathered up the letter now lying open upon the table, and began to read it quite in his class voice, as if we two had been an imposing audience.

"Dear Madam,"

"Although I have not had the pleasure of an introduction to you, I think the certificate of my cognizance by my friend Davy, will be sufficient to induce you to allow me to take charge of your son at the end of this week, if he can then be ready, as I must leave England then, and return to Paris by the middle of February. Between this journey and that time, I shall be in Germany, to attend the examinations of the Cecilia School, at Lorbeerstadt. The Cecilia School now is exactly the place for your son, though he is six months too young to be admitted. At the same time if he is to be admitted at all, he should at once be placed under direct training, and there are out-professors who undertake precisely this responsibility. My own experience proves that anything is better than beginning too late, or beginning too soon to work alone. I have made every enquiry which could be a proviso with you."

"Then here follows what would scarcely interest you," said Davy, breaking off.

"Your friend is quite right, Charles. Now can you say you are sure I may put faith in you?"

"What do you mean, mother? If you mean that I am to practise, *indeed* I will; I never want to do anything else, and I won't have any money to spend."

Davy came up to us and smiled; "I really think he is safe. You will let him come to me one evening, dear Madam?"

"Perhaps you can come to us. I really do not think we can spare him, we have so much to do in the way of preparation."

It was an admirable providence that my whole time was from morning to night taken up with my family. My sisters assisted by Margareth, made me a dozen shirts, and hemmed for me three dozen handkerchiefs. I was being measured or fitted all day, and all the evening was running up and down stairs with the completed items. Oh if you had seen my boxes you would have said that I ought to be very good to be so cared for, and very beautiful besides; yet I was neither, and was sorely longing to be away: such kindness pained me more than it pleased.

I had a little jointed bed, which you would not have believed *was* a bed until it was set up: my mother admonished me if I found my bed com-

fortable to keep that in my box; but she had some experience of German beds, and English ones too under certain circumstances. I had a gridiron, and a coffee-pot, a spirit-lamp, and a case containing one knife and fork, one plate, one spoon. I had everything I could possibly want, and felt dreadfully bewildered. Clo was marking my stockings one morning when Davy came in; he gave me one of his little brown boxes, and in the box was a single cup and saucer of that glowing, delicate china. When he pulled it out of his pocket I little knew what it was, and when I found out, how I cried!

"I have indeed brought you a small remembrance Charles, but I am a small man, and you are a small boy, and I understand you are to have a very small establishment."

He said this cheerily, but I could not laugh—he put his kind arm round me and I only wept the more. Clo was all the time quite seriously, as I have said, tracing ineffaceably my initials in German text, with crimson cotton—none of your delible inks—and Davy pretended to be very much interested in them.

"What! all those stockings, Charles?"

"Yes, Sir; you see we have provided for summer and winter," responded Clo as seriously as I mentioned, "He will not want any till we see him again, for he is to pay us a visit, if God spares him, next Christmas."

Davy sighed, and kissed my forehead—I clung to him—"Shall I see you again, Mr. Davy?"

"I have come to ask your mother whether I may take you to London; it is precisely what I came for, and I have a little plan."

Davy had actually an engagement in London, or feigned to have one; I have never been able to discover whether it was a fact or a fiction; and he proposed to my mother that I should sleep with him at his aunt's house one night, before I was deposited at the hotel where Santonio rested, and to which he had advised I should be brought.

I was in fits of delight at the idea of Davy's company, yet, after all, I did not have much of that, for he travelled to London on the top of the coach, and I was an inside passenger at my mother's request.

Then comes a sleep of memory, not unaccompanied by dreams—a dream of being hurled into a corner by a lady, and of jamming myself so

that I could not stir hand or foot between her and the window—a dream of desperate efforts to extricate myself—a dream of sudden respite, cold air and high stars beyond and above the houses; a cracked horn; a flashing lantern—a dream of dark in a hackney-coach, and of stopping in a stilly street before a many windowed mansion, as it seemed to me. Then I am aware to this hour of a dense headache, and bones almost knotted together, till there arrives the worst nightmare reality can breed—the smell of toast, muffins, and tea; the feeling of a knife and fork you cannot manage for sleepfulness, and the utter depression of your quicksilver.

I could not even look at Miss Lenhart, but I heard that her voice was going on all the time, and felt that she looked at me now and then. I was conveyed into bed by Davy without any exercise on my own part, and I slumbered in that sleep which absorbs all time, till very bright day. Then I awoke and found myself alone, though Davy had left a neat impression in the great soft bed. Presently I heard his steps, and his fingers on the lock. He brought my breakfast in his own hand, and while I forced myself to partake of it, he told

me he should carry me to Santonio at two o'clock; the steamboat leaving London Bridge at six the same evening. And at two o'clock we arrived at the hotel. In a lofty apartment sat Santonio, near a table laid for dinner.

I beheld my boxes in one corner, and my violin-case strapped to the largest; but all Santonio's luggage consisted of that case of his which had been wrapped up warm in baize, and one portmanteau. He arose and welcomed us with a smile most amiable; and having shaken hands with Davy, took hold of both mine and held them, while still rallying him in a few words about our punctuality. Then he rang for dinner, and I made stupendous efforts not to be a baby, which I should not have been sorry to find myself at that instant. The two masters talked together without noticing me, and presently I recovered; but only to be put upon the sofa which was soft as a powder-puff, and told to go to sleep. I made magnificent determinations to keep awake, but in vain, and it was just as well I could not, though I did not think so when I awoke. For just then starting and sitting up, I beheld a lamp upon the table, and heard Santonio's voice in the entry, harangu-

ing a waiter about a coach. But looking round and round into every corner I saw no Davy, and I cannot describe how I felt when I found he had kissed me, asleep, and gone away altogether. As Santonio re-entered, the sweet cordiality with which he tempered his address to me, was more painful than the roughest demeanour would have been just then, thrilling as I was with the sympathy I had never drawn except from Davy's heart, and which I had never lost since I had known him. It was as if my soul were suddenly unclad, and left to writhe naked in a sunless atmosphere; still I am glad to say I was grateful to Santonio. It was about five o'clock when we entered a hackney coach, and were conveyed to the city from the wide West End. The great river lay as a leaden dream while we ran across the bridge; but how dreamily, drowsily, I can never describe, was conveyed to me that arched darkness spanning the lesser gloom as we turned down dank sweeping steps, and alighted amidst the heavy splash of that rolling tide. There was a confusion and hurry here that mazed my faculties; and most dreadfully alarmed I became at the thought of passing into that vessel set so deep into

the water, and looking so large and helpless. I was on board, however, before I could calculate the possibilities of running away, and so getting home again. Santonio put his arm round me as I crossed to the deck, and I could not but feel how careful the great Violin was of the little human instrument committed to his care. Fairly on deck, the whirring and booming—the crowd not too great, but so busy and anxious—the head-hung lamp, and the cheery peeps into cabins lighter still through glittering wires, all gave motion to my spirit. I was soon more excited than ever, and glorified myself so much that I very nearly fell over the side of the vessel into the Thames, while I was watching the wheel that every now and then gave a sleepy start from the oily dark water. Santonio was looking after our effects for awhile, but it was he who rescued me in this instance, by pulling my great coat (exactly like Fred's) that had been made expressly for me in the Festival-town, and which feeling very new made me think about it a great deal more than it was worth. Then laughing heartily, but still not speaking, he led me down stairs. How magnificent I found all there! I was quite overpowered, never having

been in any kind of vessel; but what most charmed me was a glimpse of a second wonderful region within the long dining-room—the feminine retreat, whose door was a little bit a-jar.

The smothered noise of gathering steam came from above, and most strange was it to hear the many-footed tramp overhead, as we sat upon the sofa, that spread beneath the oval windows all around. And presently I realized the long tables, and all that there was upon them, and was especially delighted to perceive some flowers mounted upon the epergnes.

I was cravingly hungry by this time, for the first time since I had left my home, and everything here reminded me of eating. Santonio, I suppose, anticipated this fact, for he asked me immediately what I should like. I said, "I should like some tea and a slice of cold meat." He seemed amused at my choice, and while he drank a glass of some wine or other and ate a crust, I had all to myself a little round tray, with a short stout tea-pot and enormous breakfast-cup, set before me; with butter as white as milk, and cream as thick as butter; the butter being developed in a tiny pat, with a semblance of the steam-ship we were then in,

stamped upon the top; also a plate covered with meat all over, upon beginning to clear which, I discovered another cartoon in blue of the same subject. After getting to the bottom of the cup, and a quarter uncovering the plate, I could do no more in that line, and Santonio asked me what I should like to do about sleeping. I was startled, for I had not thought about the coming night at all. He led me on the instant to a certain other door, and bade me peep in; I could only think of a picture I had seen of some catacombs; in fact, I think a catacomb preferable in every respect to a sleeping-cabin. The odours that rushed out, of brandy and lamp-oil, were but visionary terrors, compared with the aspect of those supernaturally-constructed enclosed berths, in not a few of which the victims of that entombment had already deposited themselves.

"I can't sleep in there!" I said shudderingly, as I withdrew, and withdrawing, was inexpressibly revived by the air blowing down the staircase. "Oh! let us sit up all night! on the sea too!"

Santonio replied with great cordiality, that he should prefer such an arrangement to any other, and would see what could be contrived for me.

And so he did, and I can never surpass my own sensations of mere satisfaction, as I lay upon a seat on deck by ten o'clock, with a boat-cloak for my pillow, and a tarpaulin over my feet: Santonio by my side, with a cloak all over him like a skin, his feet on his fiddle-case, and an exquisitely fragrant regalia in his mouth.

My feelings soon became those of careering ecstasy, careering among stars all clear in the darkness over us, of passionate delight rocked to a dream by the undulation I began to perceive in our seaward motion. I fell asleep about midnight, and awoke again at dawn, but I experienced just enough then of existing circumstances in our position, to retreat again beneath the handkerchief I had spread upon my face; and again I slept and dreamed.

CHAPTER II.

At noon, when at length I roused myself, we were no longer upon the sea. We swept on tranquilly between banks more picturesque, more glorious, more laden with spells for me, than any haven I had fortified with Spanish castles. Castles there were too, or what I took for castles, silvery grey amidst leafless trees, and sometimes softest pine woods with their clinging mist. Then came shining country, where the sky met the sunbright slopes, and then a quiet sail at rest in the tiny harbour. But an hour or two brought me to the idea of cities, though even they were as cities in a dream. And yet this was not the Rhine; but I made sure it was so, having forgotten Clo's geography lessons,

and that there could be any other river in Germany; so that when Santonio told me its real name, I was very angry at it. After I had wearied myself with gazing, he drew me back to my seat, and began to speak more consecutively than he had done yet.

"Now Sir," said he, "do you see that castle?" pointing to something in the prospect which may or may not have been a castle, but which I immediately realized as one. "You are to be shut up there. Really and seriously you have more faith than any one I ever had the honour of introducing yet, under any circumstances whatever. Pray don't you feel any curiosity about your destination?"

"Yes, Sir, plenty, but I forgot what I was going for."

"And where you were going to?"

"Sir, I did not know where. I thought you would tell me when you liked."

"I don't know myself, but I dare say we shall fall in with your favourite 'Chevalier.'"

"My favourite who, Sir?"

"The gentleman who enslaved you at the per-

formance of the 'Messiah,' in your part of the world."

"Oh Sir! what can I ever say to you? I cannot bear it!"

"Cannot bear what? Nay you must not expect too much of him now you know who he is. He is merely a very clever composer."

"Oh Sir! how did you ever find out?"

"By writing to Milans-André—another idol for you by the way."

"Oh I know all about Milans-André."

"Indeed. And pray what is all about him?"

"I know he plays wonderfully, and fills a large theatre with one pianoforte. Stop—he has a handsome face, and long arms, rather too long for his body. He is very—let me see—something but not something else, and very famous but not beloved."

"Who told you that? a most coherent description as it happens."

"Miss Lawrence."

"Miss Lawrence is a blab. So you have no curiosity to learn your fate."

"I know *that*, but I should like to know where I am going."

"To an old gentleman in a hollow cave."

"I wish I were, and then perhaps he would teach me to make gold."

"That is like a Jew, fie! but the fiddle has made gold."

"Why like a Jew? Because they are rich, Jews I mean?"

"Richer generally than most folks, but not all either."

"Oh Sir! I did not mean money,"—but as I looked at him, I felt he would not, could not, understand what I meant, so I returned to the former charge.

"Does he live in a cellar, Sir? or in a very old house?"

"In an old house certainly. But you won't like him, Auchester, at least not at first, only he will work you rightly and take care of your morals and health."

"How, Sir?"

"By locking you up when you are at home, and sending you to walk out every day."

"Don't they all send the boys out to walk in Germany then?"

"I suppose so. But how shall you like being locked up?"

"In the dark, Sir, do you mean?"

"No boy, to practise in a little cave of your own."

"What *does* make you call it a cave?"

"Because great treasures are hidden there for such as like the bore of grubbing them up. You have no idea by the way, how much dirty work there is to do anything at all in music."

"I suppose you mean, to *get* at anything? But it cannot be worse than what people go through to get to Heaven."

"If that is your notion, you are all right. I have taken some trouble to get you into this place, for the old gentleman is a whimsical one and takes very few pupils now."

"Did you know him, Sir, before you heard of him for me?"

"He taught me all I know, except what I taught myself, and that was preciously little. But that was before he came to Lorbeerstadt. I knew nothing about this place. Your favourite learned of him when he was your age, and long afterwards."

"Who, Sir—the same?"

"The Conductor."

"Oh, Sir!"—it was a dreadful thing to feel I had as it were got hold of him and lost him again, but Santonio's manner was such that I did not think he could mean the same person.

"Are you sure it is the same, Mr. Santonio?" I reiterated again and yet again, while my companion, whose laugh had passed into a yawn, was gazing at the smoke.

"Sure? Of course I am sure. I know every Conductor in Europe."

"I dare say you do Sir, but this is not a common Conductor."

"No Conductors are common, my friend. He is very clever, a genius too and will do a great deal, but he is too young at present to be talked of without caution."

"Why, Sir?"

"Because we may spoil him."

I was indignant, I was sick, but so impotent I could only say, "Sir, has he ever heard *you* play?"

"I cannot tell really all the people who hear me play. I don't know who they are in public."

"Have you ever heard *him* play?"

"No."

"Oh, Sir! then how *can* you know? What makes you call him Chevalier? Is that his real name?"

"I tell you precisely what I was told, my boy; Milans-André calls him 'My young friend the Chevalier,'—nothing else. Most likely they gave him the order."

Santonio was now talking Dutch to me, and yet I could not bring myself to detain him by further questioning, for he had strolled to the staircase. Soon afterwards the dinner-bell rang. The afternoon being a little spent we came up again and rested. It was twilight now, and my heart throbbed as it ever does in that intermediate dream. Soon Santonio retired to smoke, and I then lay all along a seat, and looked to heaven until I fell into a doze; and all I felt was real, and I knew less of what was passing around me than of that which stirred within. Long it may have been, but it seemed very soon and suddenly, that I was rudely brought to myself by a sound, and skurry, and a suspension of our progress. It was dark, and bleak besides, and as foggy as I had ever seen it in England—the lamp at our head was like a

moon; and all about me there were shapes, not sights, of houses; and echoes, not sounds, of voices from the shore.

The shore indeed! And my first impression of Germany was one of simple astonishment, to find it on the whole so much like, or so little unlike England. I told Santonio so much, as he stood next me and curbed me with his arm from going forwards. He answered that he supposed I thought they all lived in fiddle-cases, and slept upon pianofortes. I was longing to land indefinably. I knew not where I was, how near or how far from my appointed place of rest. I will not say my heart was sad, it was only sore, to find Santonio, though so handsome, not quite so beautiful a spirit as my first friend, Lenhart Davy. We watched almost half the passengers out of the boat, the rest were to continue their fresh-water route to a large city far away, and we were the last to land of all who landed there.

In less than an hour, thanks to Santonio's quickening of the pulses of existence at our first landing-place, we were safe in a hackney-coach (very unlike any other conveyance), if indeed it could be called safe to be so bestowed, as that I was

continually precipitated against Santonio. His violin-case had never left his hand since we quitted the vessel; and this was just as well, for it might have suffered from the jolting. Its master was all kindness now: "Cheer up," said he; "do not let your idea of German life begin here. You will soon find plenty to amuse you." He rubbed the reeking fog from one glass with his handkerchief forthwith, and I, peeping out, saw something of houses drawing near. They were dim and tall and dark as if they had never fronted daylight. It took us quite half an hour to reach the village, notwithstanding, for our pace was laboriously tardy; and again and again I wished I had stayed with Santonio at the little inn where we took the coach, and to which he was himself to return to sleep, having bespoken a bed there; for I felt that day would have done everything for me in manning and spiriting me, and that there was too much mystery in my transition state already to bear the surcharging mystery of night with thought undaunted. Coming into that first street, I believed we should stop every instant, for the faint few lamps, strung here and there, gave me a notion of gabled windows and grey-black arches, nothing

more definite than any dream: so much the better. Still we stopped not anywhere in that region, nor even when, having passed the market-place with its little colonnade, we turned or were shaken into a quiet square. It came upon me like a nook of panorama; but I heard the splash of falling water before I beheld, starting from the mist, its shape, as it poured into a basin of shadowy stone beneath a skeleton tree, whose lowest sprays I could have touched as we drove near the fountain, so close we came. And then I saw before me a church, and could discern the stately steps and portico, even the crosses on the graves, which bade me remember that they died also in Germany. No organ echoes pealed nor choral song resounded, no chime struck; but my heart beat all these tunes, and for the first time I associated the feeling of religion with any earth-built shrine.

It was in a street beyond the square, and overlooked by the tower of the church itself, that at length we stopped indeed and that I found myself, bewildered at once by darkness and expectation, standing upon the pavement before a foreign doorway, enough for any picture of the brain.

"Now," said my escort, "I will take you upstairs first—for you would never find your way—and then return and see after all these things. The man won't run away with them, I believe, he is too ugly to be anything but honest. I hope you do not expect a footman to open the door."

"I dislike footmen; but there is no knocker. Please show me the bell, Mr. Santonio."

"Please remember that this is a mountain which contains many caves besides that to which we are about to commit you. And if you interfere with anybody else's cave, the inhabitant will spring up your's with gunpowder."

"I know that a great many people live in one house, my mother said so; but she never told me how you got into the houses."

"I will tell you now. You see the bells here like organ stops; this is your's. Number I cannot read, but I know it from the description I took care to procure. I will ring now, and they will let us in."

I found, after waiting in profound expectation, that the door had set itself open, just as the gate of the London Temple Garden is wont to do; but instead of finding access to sunshine and beds of

flowers, we were plunged on our entrance into darkness which might be felt.

Santonio, evidently accustomed to all conventionalities of all countries, expressed no astonishment, and did not even grumble, as I should have expected a person of his temperament to do. I was so astonished that I could not speak. How soon I learned to love that very darkness! and to leap up and down those very stairs even in the darkness! though I now held Santonio's hand so tightly, that I could feel the lissom muscles double up and bend in. He drew me after him gently and carefully to the first floor, and again to the second without speaking, and then we stood still to take breath.

"That was a pull!" he observed. "Suppose the old gentleman has gone to bed?"

"Oh, Sir! then I will go back with you until to-morrow."

"No, indeed." He laid hold upon my arm. "Listen! hush!"

"I stood listening from head to foot. I heard the beloved but unfamiliar voice; creeping down another story, it came—*my* violin, or *the* violin, somewhere up in the clouds. I longed to rush for-

wards now, and positively ran up the stairs yet remaining. There upon my one hand was the door through whose key-hole, whose every crack that sound had streamed, and I knew it as I passed, and waited for Santonio upon the haunted precinct.

"Now," said he, arriving very leisurely at the top, "we shall go in to see the old gentleman."

"Will he have a beard, Sir, as he is a Jew?"

"Who told you he has a Jew-beard? Nevertheless he has a beard, but pray hold your tongue about the Jews—at least till you know him a little better."

I did not mean, thought I diffidently, to talk to the old gentleman. If he is a Jew I shall know it, and it will be enough; but I did not say so to Santonio, who did not appear to prize his lineage, as I did the half of mine. My heart began to beat, faster than from the steep ascent, when he, without preparing me further, rapped very vigorously upon another unseen door. I heard no voice reply, but I concluded he did, as he deliberately turned the lock, and drew me immediately after him as I had shrunk behind him. I need not have been afraid—the room was empty. It was a room

full of dusky light; that is, all tones which blended into it were dim, and its quaint nicety put every new-world notion out of the way for the time. The candles upon the table were brightly trimmed, but not wax—only slender wax ones beamed in twisted sconces, from the desk of an organ that took up the whole side of the room, opposing us as we entered, and whose pipes were to my imagining childhood lost in the clouds indeed, for the roof of the room had been broken to admit them. The double key-board, open, glittered black and white, and I was only too glad to be able to examine it as closely as I wished. The room had no carpet, but I did not miss it nor want it, for the floor was satin bright with polish, and its general effect was ebony, while that of the furniture was oak. There was a curious large closet in a corner, like another little room put away into this one; but what surprised me most was that the chamber was left to itself.

"Where is he?" said Santonio, appealing to the silence; but then he seemed to be reminded, and shouted very loud in German, some name I could not realize, but which I write, having since realized. "Aronach! where art thou?"

In German, and very loud, a voice replied, as

coming down the organ pipes—"I am aloft chastising an evil spirit, nor will I descend until I have packed the devil down-stairs." At this instant, more at hand than the sound I had met upon the staircase, there was a wail as of a violin in pain, but I could not tell whether it was a fiddle or a child, until the wail in continuing shifted from semitone to semitone.

Santonio sat down on one of the chairs and laughed, then arose, having recovered himself, and observed, "If this is his behaviour I may as well go and see after your boxes, keep yourself here till I come back, but if he come down salute him in German, and it will be all right."

He retired and I remained, and now I resolved to have another good look. One side of the room I had not yet examined. Next the door I found a trio or quartette of three-legged stools fixed one into the other, and nearest them a harpsichord—a very harpsichord with crooked legs. It was covered with baize, and a pile of music-books reposed upon the baize, besides some antique instrument cases. Other and larger cases were on the floor beneath the harpsichord, and there hung a talisman or two of glittering brass upon the wall by floating ribbons of red.

Then I fastened myself upon the pictures, and those strange wreaths of withered leaves that waved between them, and whose serest hues befitted well their vicinage. As I stood beneath those pictures, those dead-brown garlands rustled as if my light breath had been the autumn wind. I was stricken at once with melancholy and romance, but I understood not clearly the precise charm of those reliques, or my melancholy would have lost itself in romance alone.

There was one portrait of Bach. I knew it again, though it was a worthier hint of him than Davy's, and underneath that portrait was something of the same kind, which vividly fascinated me by its subject. It was a very young head, almost that of an infant, lying, rather than bending over an oblong book, such, in shape, as those represented in pictures of literary cherubs. The face was more than half forehead, which the clustering locks could not conceal though they strove to shadow; and in revenge, the hair swept back, and tumbled sideways, curling into the very swell of the tender shoulder. The countenance was of sun-bright witchery, lustrous as an elf of summer laughing out of a full-blown rose. Tiny hands

were doubled round the book, and the lips were themselves a smile that seemed to stir and dimple, and to flutter those floating ringlets. It was strange I was, though so unutterably drawn to it, in nothing reminded of any child or man I had ever seen, but merely thought it an ideal of the infant music, if music could personate infancy. After a long long gaze, I looked away, expressly to have the delight of returning to it, and then I saw the stove and approved of it, instead of missing, as I was told at home I should miss, the hearth-rug and roseate fire-shine. Indeed, the stove was much more in keeping here, according to my outlandish taste.

Before I returned to the picture, Santonio re-entered, and finding me still alone, took up a broom which he discovered in some region, and, mounting on a chair, made with it no very gentle demonstrations upon the ceiling, which was low and which he could thus easily reach. In about ten minutes more, I could feel, no less than hear a footstep I did not know, for I am generally cognizant of footsteps. This was cautious and slow, yet not heavy, and I was aware it could be none other than that of my master presumptive. If I

could have turned myself into a mustard-pot, to delay my introduction, I would have done so without the slightest hesitation; but no! I remained myself, and he, all himself, opened the door, and came in. I had expected a tall man—broad; here was a little gentleman no bigger than Davy, with a firm and defiant tread, clad in a garment that wrapped about his feet, in colour brown, that passed well into the atmosphere of his cave. He confronted Santonio as if that wonder were a little girl in petticoats, with no more reverence, and not less benevolence, for he laid one arm upon his shoulder, and embraced him as in England only very young and tender brothers embrace, or a son embraces his father. There was complaisance, together with condescension in his aspect; but when he turned upon me, both complaisance and condescension were overpast, and a lour of indifference clouded my very faculties as with a film of worldly fear. Then he chucked me under the chin, and held me by it a moment without my being aware whether he examined me or not, so conveniently disposed were his black eye-lashes, and then he let me go again, and turned his back upon me.

"Sit!" said he to Santonio, and then he threw his hand behind him, and pointing, without turning his head, indicated the group of stools. I nervously disentangled one, and sat down upon it then and there by the side of the very harpsichord. Santonio being also seated, and wearing, though as cool as usual, a less dominant aspect, the brisk demon marched to the bureau, which I had taken little heed of, under the window, but which, upon his opening, I discovered to be full of all sorts of drawers and pigeon-holes, where a family of young mice would have enjoyed a game at hide-and-seek. He stood there, writing, without any apology, for some time, and only left off when a female servant, brilliant and stolid as a Dutch doll, threw the door open again, to bring in supper.

She carried both tureens and dishes, and went into the closet after bottles of wine and a table-cloth; and everything she did was very orderly, and done very quietly. She spoke to Aronach, having arranged the table, and he aroused and wiped his pen, and closed the bureau. Then he came to Santonio, and addressed him in most beautiful clear German, such German as was my mother's mother-tongue.

"I travelled very comfortably, thank you," replied Santonio, in reply to some enquiry suggestive of the journey, "and I am glad to see you younger than ever,"

"Oh! my sort don't die, we are tough as hempen cloth; it is *that* make which frets itself threadbare" —he pointed obviously at me—"What is to be done with him, eh?"

"To be left here of course, as we agreed."

"Recollect my conditions. I turn him out if he become ill."

"Oh! he is very well indeed; they are all pale in England, they have no sun."

"*Be* well then!" said Aronach, threateningly, yet not terrifyingly, "and *keep* well!"

What a silvery stream swept over his shirt-bosom! it was soft as whitest moonlight. Is that a beard? thought I—how beautiful must the high-priest have looked! This thought still touched me, when in came a boy in a blouse, and I heard no more of his practice as I now recognized it, though the wail still came from above, fitful and woe-begone. This boy was tall and slender, and his face, though he had an elegant head, was too formed and adult to be agreeable or very taking

for me. His only expression was that of haughty self-content, but there was no real pride in his bearing, and no reserve. His hands were large, but very well articulated and extremely white; there was no spirit in them, and no spirituality in his aspect. He took no notice of me, except to curl his upper lip which was not short, and which a curl did not become, as he lifted a second stool and carried it up to the table; nor did he wait to be asked to sit down upon it, and having done so, to smooth his hair off his forehead, and lean his elbows upon the table. Then Aronach took a chair, and admonished Santonio to do the same. The latter made himself instantly at home, but most charmingly so, and began to help himself from a dish directly. The young gentleman upon the stool was just about to lift the cover from the tureen in the same style, when Aronach roused, and looking grandly upon him said, or rather muttered, "Where are thy manners? Is it thy place in my house to ape my guests? See to thy companion there, who is wearier than thou, and yet he waits. Go and bring him up, or thou shalt give thy supper to the cat's daughter."

"So I will," responded the blouse, with assu-

rance, and leaving his stool abruptly, he ran into the closet aforementioned, and brought back a kitten, which as he held it by the nape of its neck came peaceably enough, but upon his dropping it roughly to the floor, set up a squeak. Now the wrath of Aronach appeared too profound for utterance; raising his deep-set but lightsome eyes from a perfect thicket of lashes, he gave the impertinent one look which reminded me of Van Amburgh in the lion's den. Then, ladling three or four spoonfuls of soup or broth into a plate, he set the plate upon the floor and the kitten at it, so seriously, that I dared not laugh. The kitten, meantime, unused to strong meats, for it was not a week-old mite—mewed and whined in antiphon to the savage lamentations of another cat in the closet, its maternal parent. The blouse never stirred an inch, save carelessly to sneer over his shoulder at me, and I never loved him from that moment. But Santonio nodded to me significantly, as to say, "Come here!" and I came and planted my stool at his side.

Aronach took no notice, but went on pouring coffee, one cup of which he set by the kitten. Again she piteously smelled, but finding it even

worse than the broth, she crept up to the closet-door and smelled at that.

"Go up!" said Aronach to the blouse, "and send Burney to his supper. He shall have the cat's supper, as thou hast given thine to the cat."

He went out sulkily, and the wail above ceased. I also heard footsteps, but he came back again alone.

"He won't come down."

"Won't! did he say won't, Iskar? Have a care!"

"He says he wants no supper."

"That I have taken away his stomach, eh? Come hither thou black and white bird that art not yet a pyet."

This was to me, I was just sliding from my stool.

"Eat and drink first, and then thou shalt carry it to him. Thou lookest better brought up. Don't grimace, Iskar, or thou shalt sleep in the cupboard with the cat, and the rats shall dance in thy fine curls. So, now eat, Aukester, if that be thy name."

"Sir, I am Carl, will you please to call me Carl?"

He gave me a glance from behind the coffee-stand. Sparks as from steel seemed to come out of his orbs and fly about my brain, but I was not

frightened the least, for the lips of this austerest of autocrats were smiling like sunlight beneath the silver hair. I saw at this moment that Aronach had a bowl of smoking milk crammed with bread by his side, and believing it to be for the violin up in the clouds, and concluding inferentially that the unseen was some one very small, I entreated Aronach without fear to let me carry it to him while yet it smoked.

He did not object, but rather stared, and observed to Santonio, "His father makes a baby of him; to give a boy such stuff is enough to make a girl grow up instead." Still he handed it to me with the caution, "If thou fallest on thy nose in going up to Heaven, the kitten will lose her supper, for the milk is all used up in the town." I could just see a very narrow set of steps, exactly like a belfry-stair, when I opened the door, and having shut it again and found myself in darkness, I concluded to leave the bowl on the ground till I had explored to the top. I did so and spun upwards, discovering another door, to which, though also in darkness, the wail of the violin became my light. I just unlatched it, and returned for my

burden, carefully adjusting spoon and basin on the road back. I knocked first not to alarm the semitonic inhabitant, and then, receiving no intimation, entered of my own accord. It was a queer region, hardly so superior as a garret, extremely low and vast, with mountains of lumber in every corner, and in the midst a pile of boxes with a portmanteau or two, and many items of property which for me were nondescript. It had no furniture of its own besides, but to do it justice it was weatherproof. I could see all this rugged imagery on the instant, but not so easily I discerned a little figure in the very centre of the boxes, sitting upon the least of the boxes, and solitarily regaling the silence without either desk or book, with what had made me suffer below stairs. The organ-pipes came up here, and reached to the very roof; they gave me a strange feeling, as of something misplaced and mangled, but otherwise I was charmed to discover them. I hastened across the floor—the player was certainly not an adept—a tiny, lonely looking boy, who, as I went up to him, almost let his fiddle fall with fright, and shrunk from me, as some little children do from dogs. I was as tall

again as he, and felt quite manly. "I am only come," I said, "to bring your supper—have it while it is hot; it is so good then!"

Do not believe, sweet reader, that my German was more polished than my English; it was quite the same. He dropped his bow upon the nearest box, and depressing his violin so that it touched the ground while he still held it, looked up at me with such a wistful wonder, his lip still quivering his pretty hair all ruffled up,

"I don't want it, thank you."

"You must eat it; you have been up here ever so long."

"Yes, a good while; please take it away. Are you the new one who was coming?"

"Who said I was coming?"

"The master. He said you would beat us both, and get first to Cecilia."

"That is because I am older. I can't play the least in the world. I don't know even how to hold the bow. Come, *do* eat this good-looking stuff."

"I don't think I can, I feel so sick."

"That is because you *do* want something to eat."

"It is not that"—he touched my jacket. "This is what they wear in England. I do wish you would talk English to me."

I was touched almost into tears.—"You are such a little darling!" I exclaimed; and I would have given anything to fondle him, but I was afraid of staying, so I took a spoonful of the milk and put it to his lips, still another and another till he had taken it all; and then I said, "Do not practise any more;" for he was disconsolately gathering up his bow.

"I must until bedtime; but I am so sleepy."

"Why are you left up here? I will stay with you."

"No, no, you must not. I only came up here because the master caught me looking out of the window this morning, and the windows here don't show you anything but the sky."

As I went out at the door I looked after him again. He was just finishing one of those long yawns that babes delight in. The moment I found my way below, I marched to the master's chair. He was awful in his dignity then, with the wine bottle beside him, and a glass held halfway to his lips.

"Sir, he has eaten it all, but he is so very sleepy, may'nt he go to bed?"

Santonio was so overcome with laughter at my audacity, though I was really very much alarmed, that he leaned back in his chair and shook again. Aronach bent upon me his flowing beard: "Dost thou know to refrain thyself, as well as thou knowest to rebuke thine elders?" But I could plainly see he was not angry, for he arose and tapped upon the ceiling with a stout oak staff that he fished from the unimagined closet. Then the little one came down and into the room, shy of Santonio, and keeping behind his chair, as he murmured "good night" to Aronach. The latter gave him a nod, which would not have disgraced Jove in full council. Santonio requested very kindly that I too might go to bed; and in a few minutes I found myself in that little cave of my own, of which he had made mention.

Its entrance was hard by, through one of the very doors I had noticed when the glimmer showed me the staircase, and it entirely answered my expectations, in so far as that it was very dim and haunted-looking, very unlike my own room in England, or any of our rooms at home. It had a stove, a looking-glass, and a press large enough to contain a bride's trousseau complete. There was

also a recess which seemed lined with London fog, but which on examination, by the light of my candle, I found to contain the bed in a box, of which my mother had forewarned me. I could no more have slept in it than if it had been a coffin, and for the first time I fully appreciated her provision for my comfort in this particular. My boxes were all there, and I uncorded them and drew forth my keys. My excellent sister Clo had packed in one trunk the bed and bedding, and one set of night-clothes, also a variety of toilette necessaries in holland bags. It was quite an affair to lift out the pieces; they were fitted into each other so beautifully, that it was natural to imagine they could never be got back again. None but an experienced feminine hand could have accomplished such a feat, and very carefully had I been inducted into the puzzlement of putting the parts together. I had just unfolded the tight white mattress, so narrow, but so exactly wide enough, when Santonio knocked at the door to bid me good night and farewell; and as he came in he assisted me in the accomplishment of my plans with that assiduous deftness which pre-eminently distinguishes the instrumental artist. He most

kindly offered to see me into bed; but that was out of the question, so I let him go with my hearty thanks. It was not the least a melancholy feeling with which I stretched myself, all tingling with my rapid ablutions, beneath my home-blanket. I did not the least long after home, nor the least experience the mother-sickness that is the very treble-string of humility to many a hero in his inaugurative exile; but I felt extremely old, grand, and self-reliant; especially satisfied, in spite of my present ignorance, that by some means or other this Aronach would make a man of me, and not a trifler. I was just asleep when I heard a hand on the lock, and that no dream, for a voice vociferated, roughly enough—"Out with the light!" I sprang up and opened the door.

"It is only my little lamp Sir, that I brought with me, and it is very safe as you see; but still if you wish it I will try to sleep in the dark. I have never liked to do so because it excites me."

"Bah! thou art too young to know the meaning of excitement. But for the sake of some one else who loves the night-lamp, thou mayest keep thine eyes open with it, and thank him too, for it is his doing. Now, get back to bed! and don't come out

again—the quick and living walk not about in night-smocks here."

I heard him bolt me in as soon as I shut the door. I cannot say this proceeding pleased me, but on the contrary cost me many a cold sweat until I became accustomed to it. I lay a little while awake, now spying out such variations from English style as had escaped me on my first acquaintance with my quarters; then reverted to Aronach's dark hint about the person, who like me was excited by the darkness; and at last recollected my contemporaries, and speculated upon their present circumstantials. Most softly did that poor little soul present himself to mine as he played with my buttons, and I secretly determined to become his protector and ally; as for the imp in the blouse I abjured him at first sight; perhaps because he was, though repugnant to my taste, handsome and elegant, and I was neither.

CHAPTER III.

I AWOKE with sonorous cries, and sounds of bells, and songs of sellers, and the dim ringing of wheels on a frosty soil. Hard and white the day-dews stood upon the windows; the sky was clear as light itself; and my soul sprang as into the arms of freedom. It occurred to me that I was perhaps late, and I dressed fast: about half-way to the end, I heard the violins begin both of them, but now they outrageously contradicted each other in different directions, and I could keep by my ear to neither.

I made the utmost haste, but, as in most cases, it was least speed; I pulled off a button, and then a shoe-string came loose. I had to begin very

nearly all over again; and when at length equipped, I recalled the incarceration of the previous night, and wondered how long I should stay there: but a sudden impulse sent me to the door, and immediately it yielded to my hand. "He has been here then," I thought, "and has not awakened me, because I was tired last night. How good to be sure! not at all what I expected." I sallied forth to the landing; it was like a room itself, but still dark, dark for day-time; and I could only make out its extent by the glimmer through the crack beneath every door. I listened at each first, not knowing at the instant which was which, but the violins asserted themselves, and I chose one to unlock on my own responsibility. I had made a mistake here, and came into the untenanted organ-room where we had supped. There the wintry light reigned full, and freshened up the old tints till they gleamed no more dusky but rich.

The pictures and wreaths of other years gave welcome to me, that magic child especially; nor less the harpsichord unopened, quiet, while those sounds of younger violins broke through and through my fancy, and made my heart swell up till I could have fainted with emotion.

But of all that pressed upon me, the crowning sense was of that silent organ lost in the shady roof; the sun playing upon those columned tubes, and the black-white keyboard clustering to hide its wealth of "unheard melodies," sweeter than those "*heard*," as one has sung, who can surely never have *heard* them!

The chamber had been brushed and swept, but still the fine dust flew, and caught the sunshine on its eddies like another shade of light. There was no one in the room, and, my first flush over, I felt alone and idle. The table was spread for breakfast as I discovered last of all; and I question whether such coffee as stood upon the stove so cosily could be surpassed even in Arabia. It was so perfect that it stood the test of sugarlessness, which I preferred, if possible. Standing to eat and drink in all haste, a speculation stung me—where was my violin? It had not even slept with me; I had missed it in my room—that baby of mine, that doll, that ladykin! I looked everywhere, at least everywhere I could; the closet-door I did not try, justly supposing that it was not my place to do so; and at last I concluded to attack my fellow-pupils.

I found my small friend's door very easily, and turned the key to admit myself. The room to my amazement was precisely like my own, even to that bed in the recess; and the inmate was not alarmed, for he evidently expected me.

"Oh!" he said, after putting up his lips to mine, "Marc has your study for this morning; the master gave it him to keep till you were ready. But mind you lock me in again when you get out, or he will flog you and me."

"Did he ever flog you yet?"

"No, and he does not call it flog, but he did tie Marc's hands together one day, and he said it was the same to him to do that as for an English master to flog."

"A very mild type, I think. But who is Marc?"

"Marc Iskar; you saw him last night. He won't speak to me; he says I am too young."

"So much the better for you. And what is your little name?"

"I am Starwood Burney, but I should like you to call me Star, as my papa does."

"That I will, my German aster!"

"Aster is Latin; I have begun Latin. But do

please go, I have so much to do, and he will be so very angry; so very, very cross!"

"How dare you say so, when he has never even tied your hands together! You should not be hurt nor disgraced, little Starling; if I were there, I would be punished instead, for I have twice your strength. But you should try to love him while you fear him."

"You speak like a great man, and I will try but please to go now, for I find this very hard."

I left him, having selfishly shrunk from the necessity to interrogate Iskar.

I stole to his door: I was really electrified as I stood, not with envy, but with amazement. He was already a wonderful mechanist. Such sallies of execution were to me tremendous, but his tone did not charm me, and I imagined it might be the defect of his instrument that it sounded thin and cold, unlike my notion altogether, and frosty as the frost without. Clearly and crisply it saluted me as I entered. The room was like ours—the little one's and mine; but it was gaily adorned with pictures of the lowest order, such as are hawked about the streets in England, and only conspicuous from their unnaturally vivid colouring.

They were chiefly figures of ladies dancing, or of gentlemen brandishing the sword and helmet—theatrical subjects, as I afterwards discovered. Iskar was sitting before his desk, and had his face from me: as I approached my awe was doubled at his performance, for I beheld Corelli's solos; I had heard of those from Davy. Another desk was also near him, and a second violin-case stood upon the floor. I asked him very modestly whether they were mine; he replied, without regarding me, "That sheet of paper has your exercise upon it, and if you cannot play it you are to look in Marenthal's Prolusion, which is in the bureau under the desk. You are to take all these things into your own room."

There was something in the tones of the blouse—he was yet in blouse—that irritated me intensely; his voice was defined as that of his violin, and to the full as frosty. I was only too happy to retire. Then, sitting upon my own bed, I examined the exercise. It was drearily indistinct; a copy, and I could make nothing of it; the mere Germanisms of the novel rests and signs appalled me. I could neither handle the violin nor steady the bow; but I had carefully borne in mind the

methods I had observed when I had had opportunity, and I stooped to take this child of music from its cradle. It was no more mine own than I had expected; an awkward bulky frame it had, and I did not feel to love it nor to bring it to my heart. Something must be done I felt, and I returned to the organ-room. I found the Prolusion, as Iskar said; an awfully Faustish tome, with rusty clasps, the letters worn off the back. I was in doom certainly. It was close black national type, and I pored and bored myself over it leaf after leaf, until blissfully I arrived at the very exercise prepared for me. It was presented in illustration, and there were saw-like enunciations of every step; but half the words were unknown to me, and I grew rigid with despair. "Oh!" I cried aloud, "if some one would only tell me! if Davy were only here! if Lenhart Davy knew!" Still I slackened not in my most laughable labour, endeavouring to interpret such words as I could not translate, by their connexion with others I did know, by their look and make—their euphony. I was vocalizing them very loud, and had made out already the first position; when a rattle of the closet lock turned me all over cold. I listened, it

came again; a tremendous "So!" followed, and the door opening displayed Aronach himself, in the glories of a morning gown. How could he have got in there, and how have come out upon me so suddenly without any warning! and, above all, how would he behave to me, finding me so ignorant! I believe that on account of my very ignorance I found favour in his sight, he truly wise;—for, merely alluding to my condition in this form—"Thou hast shown thyself faithful, only keep thy faith;" he bade me bring my traps in there, and assured me, merely by his aspect, that he would clear every stone from my path.

When I returned he was standing between the organ and the window: a grander picture could not be perpetrated of the life-long labouring, and for love's sake aspiring, artist. His furrowed forehead was clear as rutted snow in the serene of sunlight as he appeared then; and through all the sternness with which he spoke I discerned the gentleness of art's impression. And after the most careful initiation into the simplest mechanical process, he dismissed me to work alone, nor did I relax from that one exercise for a week.

But a great deal chanced in that week besides.

We spent each day alike, except Sunday. On other days we breakfasted very soon after it was light, on milk porridge or bread and coffee; but sometimes Aronach would breakfast alone in his cave, which was that very closet I mentioned, and in which the day must have been developed about as decidedly as beneath the ground. However, he had his lamp in there, and his private escritoir, besides all kinds of books and papers, that were seldom produced in our presence, and then only one at a time.

The kitten's basket was there, too, and there were shelves upon shelves, containing napery, and all sorts of oddities that had their nest there after being hatched in crannies of the old man's brain. The first time I took a peep, I discerned my own violin, carefully enough housed, but quite above my reach. I fumed a little, of course, but did not betray myself; and it was well I did not, as Iskar and little Starwood both practised on common fiddles scraping could not rasp, nor inexperience injure.

After breakfast, we worked till noon under lock and key; at noon we dined, and at two o'clock were sent to walk. I do not know whether I put

down Aronach as a tyrant; he must, at least be so written, in that his whims, no less than his laws, were unalterable. A whim it certainly was that we should always walk one way, and the same distance every day, unless he sent us on any special errand. This promenade, though monotonous, became dear to me, and I soon learned to appreciate the morale of that regime. We could not go to Cecilia, which had its village only two miles off, and whose soft blue gentle hill was near enough to woo, and distant enough to tempt the dreamer, —nor would our guide, at hand, permit us to approach the precinct consecrated to such artistic graduation as we had not yet attained.

In the mornings, Aronach was either absent abroad, instructing, or writing at home; but we never got at him, and were not suffered to apply to him until the evening. As we could not play truant, unless we had battered down the doors, so we could not associate with each other unreservedly, except in our walks; and, on those occasions, pretty often, our master came too, calling on his friends as he passed their houses, while we paraded up and down; but whenever he was by our side, silent as a ruminant ox, and awful

as Apis to the Egyptians, for Starwood and for me. When he came not, it would have been charming, but for Iskar, who was either too fine to talk, or else had nothing at his command to say; and whose deportment was so drearily sarcastic, that neither of us, his companions, ever ventured an original or a sympathising remark.

On my first Sunday, I took Starwood to church, that is we preceded Aronach, who was lecturing Iskar and sent us on beforehand. The little one was bright this morning, and as I looked upon his musically-built brow, and trembling colour, and expressive eyes, blue as the air at evening and full of that sort of light, I could not make clear to myself how it was that he so disliked his work, and drooped beneath it in the effort to master his frail body by his struggling soul. We had turned into the place of the church—the leafless lindens were whispering to it—and we rested by the stone basin, while the bells came springing through the frost-clear day, like—yet how unlike—England! I was afraid my small companion would be cold, and I put one of his long little hands into my pocket with my own, while I made him tuck the other into both his warm gloves, till by degrees,

having coaxed and comforted him to the utmost, he told me more about himself than I had known before. He was extremely timid to talk, shy as a fawn, even to me; but at last I made out satisfactorily the secret of his antipathy to his violin. I cannot remember all his words; besides they were too infantine to write; but he described himself as having spent that most forlorn of all untended childhoods, which befalls the motherless offspring of the needy artist in England. His father had lived in London, and taught music, but had left him constantly alone; and I also discovered he had been, and was still an organist. The child assured me his mamma had been a beautiful player, but that no one ever opened her grand piano, which stood in a parlour above the street.

"I always knew I was to grow up to music," said Starwood, "for mamma had told me so, and she taught me my notes when I was only four years old. When she died no one taught me; and while papa was out all day, I played with my toys, and sat upon the stairs. One day, some men came up, and nearly fell over me. I ran into the parlour, and they came too. They knocked the piano about, and began to take its legs off. I called out

to them, 'You must not touch that, it is my mamma's!'

"They did not take any notice, but made a great noise, and at last they carried it away, all of it, upon their shoulders. I saw it go down stairs, and I sat there all day and cried; I was very miserable I know. Papa came home at last, when I was so unhappy I thought I must die, and it was all in the dark, and very cold. He carried me in his arms, and made me tell him why I cried. I said, 'Because of the piano,' and he told me he had sold it because it was so large, and because he wanted the money. I know he was very poor Charles, for a gentleman who was very kind to him gave him some more money to send me here, or I could not have come; but I wish he had kept me at home, and taught me himself."

"But how," I replied, "can you be sorry now? We ought to be most gloriously happy to find ourselves here; but you fret, my dear little boy, and mope, and that makes you thin, and takes the strength out of you that you want for music."

"Ah! that is not it; you don't know, Charles, how I feel; I know you don't, for you love your violin."

"I should think I did!"

"Well, I am strange to it, and don't love it; at least, don't love to play it."

"But why did you not tell your father so before he sent you here? You know you will never do anything well that you don't love to do—it is impossible. And not to love the violin, Star, for shame!"

"It is not that—oh, don't be angry with me!—but my music is in the beautiful cold keys."

"Darling little Star! I beg your pardon; but then why don't you learn the piano?"

"But, Charles, I cannot. I was sent here to learn the violin, and I *must* study it. Aronach does not let any one study the pianoforte under him now."

"He did then?"

"Yes, a long time ago, when he lived in another place, about thirty miles off. Have you heard Aronach play the organ?"

"No; have you?"

"Oh, every Sunday."

"You don't say so Star! is it not delicious?"

"Charles, I like it best of all the days in the week because he plays. Such different playing from what they have at church in England."

"I shall go up to the organ and see him play."

"Charles! Charles! don't, please don't! we never do."

"Then I shall be the first, for go I must. There is precious Aronach himself; I will run after him wherever he goes."

I did so most rudely, forsaking Starwood, who did not dare to follow me; but I would not miss the opportunity. I spun after Aronach so noiselessly as that he had no notion I was following, though in general he had eyes behind; and he did not perceive me until the service had absolutely begun. Then I made myself visible, and caught a frown which was accompanied by a helpless condition truly edifying, for his arms and hands and eyes and feet were all equally on service. I therefore remained, and made out more about the instrument than I had made out my whole life before. His was a genuine organ-hand, that could stretch itself indefinitely, and yet double up so crawlingly, that the fingers as they lay were like stems of corrugated ivory; and I watched only less than I listened. The choir so full and perfect, trained to every individual, mounted its effects as it were, upon those of the controlling harmonies:

there was a depth in these that supported their air-waving tones, as pillars solid and polished a vaulted roof where shadows waver and nestle. I found a book, and sang at intervals, but generally preferred to receive the actual impression. I think my first mother-feeling for Germany was born that Sunday in pleasurable pain.

None can know who has not felt, none feel who has not heard, the spell of those haunting services in the land of Luther—the chorale so grave and powerful, with its interpieces so light and florid, like slender fretworks on a marble shrine—the unisonous pause, the antiphonal repose, the deep sense of worship stirred by the sense of sound. From that Sunday I always went with Aronach, unbidden but unforbidden; and as I learned to be very expert in stopping, I substituted very speedily the functionary who had performed the office before my advent.

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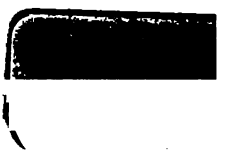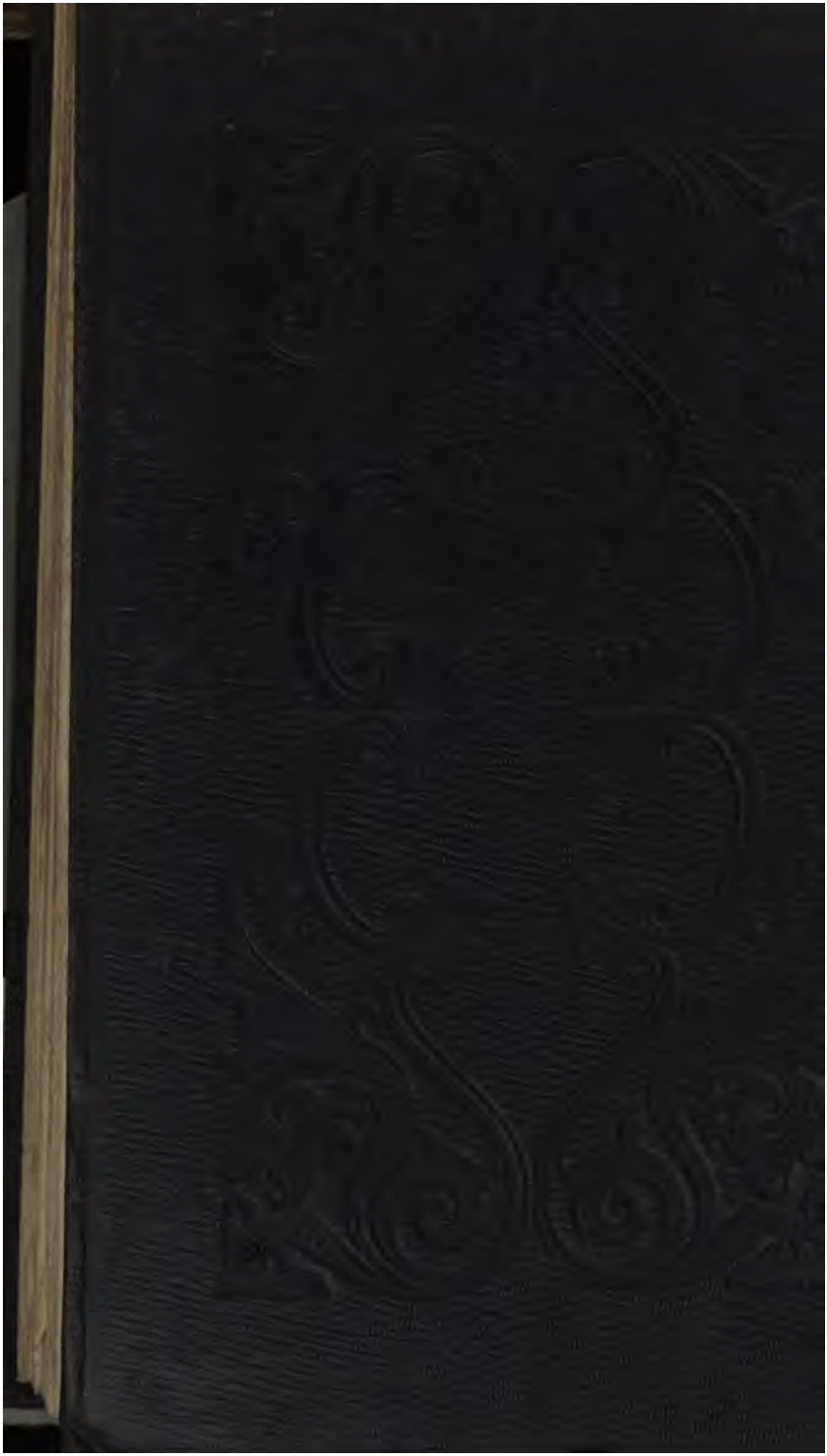
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